A

Syſtem of Divinity,

in

A COURSE of SERMONS,

on the

FIRST INSTITUTIONS of RELIGION;

On the BEING and ATTRIBUTES of GOD;

on ſome of the moſt important

ARTICLES of the CHRISTIAN-RELIGION,

in Connection;

And

On the ſeveral Virtues and Vices of Mankind:

with Occaſional Diſcourſes.

Being a Compilation from the beſt Sentiments of the polite Writers, and eminent, ſound Divines, both ancient and modern, on the ſame Subjects, properly connected, with Improvements, particularly adapted for the Uſe of chief FAMILIES and STUDENTS in DIVINITY; and for CHURCHES, for the Benefit of Mankind in general.

Volume VIII.

By the Rev'd Wm. DAVY. A. B.

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MDCCXCVIII.

SERMONS

on

the ſeveral Virtues

and

Vices of Mankind.

"Cry aloud, ſpare not, lift up thy Voice like "a Trumpet, and ſhew my People their "Tranſgreſſion, and the Houſe of Jacob "their Sins." *Iſaiah.*

"Ceaſe to do Evil: — Learn to do well." *Iſaiah.*

"Abhor that which is Evil: — Cleave to that "which is Good." *Paul.*

"Add to your Faith Virtue." *Petr.*

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Againſt Hatred.

Gal. v. 19, 20. "The Works of the Fleſh are "manifeſt, which are theſe, — Hatred," &c.

The firſt important Buſineſs of Man, eſpecially of the Inſtructers of Men, in Order to preſerve or reclaim them from Vice, eſpecially from any Miſconduct to their Fellow-creatures, is, to cleanſe the Heart or Mind, from whence, (as our Saviour informs us, *) "all Evil proceeds."

To this Purpoſe we have here an eminent Inſtance; and it being ranked high among the Vices of Mankind, determines us in the Choice of it, ſubſequent to Infidelity, (‡) (the Source of all Impiety,) as introductory to Subjects of this Nature, which the Apoſtle cautions the People of Galatia, (and, in them, all ſucceeding Ages of Mankind:) to avoid: not only by Reaſon of their bad Conſequences to them hereafter; but alſo as they are a Sign, a ſure Mark and Characteriſtick of their Reprobation from God, and the Evils which they here bring upon Men. The

(*) Mat xv. 19. (‡) In the preceeding Volume.

The Subject before us relates only to the Matter of Hatred; which, as it is an Evil of the Mind only, Men think themſelves excuſable in the Indulgence of it. The Generality of Mankind are apt to conſider the Regulation of external Conduct as the chief Object of Religion. If they can act their Part with Decency, and maintain a fair Character, they conceive their Duty to be fulfilled. What paſſes in the main Time within their Heart, they ſuppoſe to be of no great Conſequence; either to themſelves, or to the World.

In Oppoſition to which dangerous Plan of Morality the Apoſtle ranks here, in the Catalogue of the moſt heinous Sins Men can be guilty of, This, of the Mind, "Hatred;" from whence, as from an impure Fountain, all the ſubſequent Evils, "Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife," &c. naturally proceed.

In ſpeaking further to this Subject, I ſhall,

First, Shew the Nature of it; and how far it may be encouraged; and when, and in what Inſtances, it becomes ſinful.

II. The ill Foundation of it, and its Wickedneſs before God. — And then,

III. The Reaſons diſſuading from it. And,

First, As to the Nature of it; It is an Effect of Emotion

Emotion raiſed in the Mind by the Sight or Apprehenſion of diſagreeable Objects, and is good or evil, according to the Cauſe that effects it, and to the Degree in which it is indulged.

If our own Sins, or the Sins of others be the Occaſion of it, it then becomes a Virtue, and ought to be encouraged in us, only with this Reſtriction, that we always diſtinguiſh between the Sin and the Sinner; and whilſt we hate the Vice, we bear no Ill-will to Perſon of him who commits it; and with this Limitation, (however odly the Thing may ſound,) many are the Subjects which may juſtly become the Objects of our Hatred; thus it is made the Character of a good Man, that he "hateth Lying," and of a godly Man, that he "hateth even the Garment ſpotted by the Fleſh;" and, that he "hateth them that work Wickedneſs," (i.e) the Wickedneſs of the Wicked: — it being then only, (as it moſt frequently is, and as the Apoſtle in the Text, particularly regards it,) an evil Paſſion, when it hath either the Perſons, or Excellencies of others in Abhorrence and Deteſtation.

The Affections and Paſſions are not in themſelves evil, as ſome of the ancient Philoſophers vainly imagined, but were implanted in us by the wiſe Author of our Beings, for excellent Ends and very uſeful Purpoſes: that we, whoſe mixt Nature of Body and

Spirit would otherwiſe have made us too remiſs in purſuing the Ends to which bare abſtract Reaſon directed us, might, by the Affections and Paſſions, under the Regulation of Reaſon, and ſubordinate to it, (i.e) by reaſonable Hopes and Fears, by Love and Hatred, by Anger and Complacency, be excited to be more earneſt, conſtant, and diligent in all thoſe Actions of Life, which Reaſon directs, and the Affections execute.

Every Natural Temper, properly managed and improved may give us an Advantage, either for the Practice of ſome particular Virtue, or for the general Security of it.

Some Turns of Temper are naturally and ſtrongly allied to Virtue: Others are, as it were, neutral, between Virtue and Vice: — And, in perceiving how Theſe may be rendered ſerviceable to Virtue, there is ſome Difficulty. — Thus,

With Reſpect to Hatred; This Paſſion bears an ill Name; and yet, even This, with others, may be made of excellent Uſe to us; it may ſtrengthen in us an Abhorrence of Vice, which is one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt permanent Securities againſt the Indulgence of it: — nay ſometimes, our Hatred may turn upon ourſelves, and make us grow warm againſt our Boſom-ſin.

So

So that, by the Help of this Paſſion, (when properly directed,) we may keep off, or caſt out an Evil Spirit. – The Truth is, there ſeems to be ſomething manly, and we are bold to ſay, ſomething virtuous, in a juſt and well-grounded Reſentment.

In the mean Time, – Let us not be ſuſpected of endeavouring to vindicate Ill-will, Averſion, and implacable Severity among Men: No; ſuch is their Deformity, ſo horrid and manifeſt are the Evils they produce, that they do not admit of Defence or Juſtification; we condemn, we deteſt them as unnatural, brutiſh, unmanly and monſtrous. – All we contend for, is, that to treat Hatred in every Reſpect, as a Vice, and to regard it, in all Caſes, as a Matter to be avoided, is not only unphiloſophical; but really prejudicial. — But Envy, Malice, and Detraction, can be of no good Uſe; they being wholly Vice, without any Mixture, or Poſſibility of Virtue in them.

It is not neceſſary to enlarge further on this Particular. It was needful only to obſerve, (becauſe it is not ſo obvious,) that even this, with other Turns of Temper, which are moſt nearly allied to Vice, and which are, with the greateſt Difficulty, kept from running into it, may, notwithſtanding, be rendered ſubſervient to Virtue; that it is our Duty, therefore, to conſider things rightly, and not to confound their Order and

Nature; but, with the Evils attending them, we weigh alſo their Advantages, and improve them with Care.

This Diſtinction being made, in Order to the true Underſtanding of this Subject, and that we may not confound two ſeparate Ideas in one and the ſame thing, I ſhall proceed,

II. To the Vice itſelf, in its deformed Aſpect, and ſhew the ill Grounds upon which it is founded, and the Sinfulneſs of it. — And here,

We cannot but take notice that even the Heathen Moraliſts themſelves have filled their Diſcourſes with Arguments againſt irregular and diſorderly Paſſions, drawn from the Indecency and Unſeemlineſs of the thing itſelf, from the Shame and Indignity of a Reaſonable Creature's being ſubject to ſuch unreaſonable Slavery, from the Uneaſineſs of it to ourſelves, and Injuriouſneſs of it to others, as well as from other Conſiderations, which prove a Man, who is governed by this Paſſion, to be incapable of any true Philoſophy, or coming up to, ſo much as, the moral Improvements, but of a wiſe Heathen: and, the Scripture itſelf ſpeaks of it in the ſevereſt Light: "He that hateth his Brother is a Murderer." — Now,

If, upon the common Principles of Reaſon and Morality, and upon the bare Conſideration of the Dignity

Dignity of our Nature above the Beaſts that periſh, we are obliged to ſubdue our Paſſions to the Standard of Reaſon; how much more is a Chriſtian bound to keep himſelf under ſtricter and more ſevere Reſtraints? — For,

When a Chriſtian indulges this Paſſion, let him conſider WHO it is, that acts thus unworthily, and behaves ſo unbecoming? A Man endued with Reaſon and Underſtanding: – A Man, whoſe Reaſon is improved, not by Philoſophy only, but moreover by the Knowledge of the revealed Will of God; – a Man for whom Chriſt died: – to God has been freely reconciled, – who, out of mere Mercy and undeſerved Compaſſion, vouchſafed to turn away his Hatred from him. — And!

Againſt whom does he direct the Violence of his Hatred? Againſt a Man like himſelf: One for whom Chriſt died, as well as for himſelf, and by his own Blood redeemed them Both from Death. — And!

What is it for? Perhaps for ſuperior natural or acquired Excellencies, or unavoidable perſonal Defect, for Succeſs in Life, – for a careleſs Word, or an undeſigned Provocation; – for Difference only in Opinion; or, poſſibly, for retaining a good Conſcience, and not daring to do, what the other expected from him; – at the moſt for ſome ſlight and trivial Offence;

for not being able to repay him his hundred Pence; when God hath forgiven them both, their ten thouſand Talents.

We have many Examples, in Scripture, of Offenders of this Kind. Cain hated his Brother, and ſlew him, becauſe his Brother's Sacrifice was more acceptable with God, than his: – Eſau hated his Brother for the Bleſſing wherewith his Father Iſaac had bleſſed him: – the Brethren of Joſeph hated him, becauſe his Father loved him; and could not, on that Account, ſpeak peaceably to him: – Ahab, in like Manner, hated Miciah, the Prophet, for propheſying the Truth concerning him: – and thus the Profligates are repreſented by Solomon, as hating the Righteous, becauſe their Deeds were of another Sort from their's, and even grievous to behold: – and, (to name no more, in this Caſe, at preſent,) thus, in our Saviour's Days, both He and his Father were hated, becauſe He had told them the Truth, and done among them the Works which no other Man did. — But,

With Regard even to the loweſt of theſe, Men's natural Infirmities and lower Qualifications, (which have ſo great a Share in the Diſeſteem of Mankind,) when we read that Man was created "in the Image of God," what can we infer from hence, but that to hate any Man on this Account, muſt needs involve in it ſome

Degree

Degree of Contempt of that Being, whoſe Image he bears? Indeed,

When Revelation informs us, that every good Chriſtian is the "Temple of the Holy Ghoſt," and that Men's various Endowments are the Gift of that "One ſelf-ſame Spirit, who divideth to every Man ſeverally as he will;" the loweſt Abilities, in this View, appear by no Means an Object of Contempt.

"He that, (on this Account deſpiſeth,) deſpiſeth not Man, but God; who hath alſo given unto us his Holy Spirit." — But,

It may be ſaid, that this is only an Evil of the Mind, and extends not, in its Effects, to Men; and is therefore of no great Conſequence to any.

If we could grant this, (as we ſhall prove the Reverſe hereafter in this Diſcourſe,) yet This is no Plea before God; for even "the Thought of Fooliſhneſs is Sin" before him: much more our Contempt and Hatred of our Brethren. For, while the Bent of the Heart is turned towards Sin, and Men are under the Power of any vicious reigning Inclination, tho out of any prudential Motives they are reſtrained from the outward Act of Sin, the Guilt of it notwithſtanding will be charged upon their Conſciences; for, in the Judgment of God, and indeed, in the very Reaſon of the thing, (when we conſider ourſelves as free

and moral Agents,) "THE MIND IS THE MAN."

Virtue and Vice, Religion and Irreligion do not conſiſt merely or principally in outward Acts, but in the Diſpoſition of the Mind, and a Man deſervedly procures the laſting Epithets of good or bad, as he appears either to be ſwayed by, or regardleſs of it. Independent of all Actions, it is, in Truth, the State of the Heart itſelf which forms our Character in the Sight of God. With our Fellow-creatures, Actions muſt hold the chief Rank, becauſe by Theſe only we can judge of one another; by theſe we effect each other's Welfare, and therefore to theſe alone the Regulation of Human Law extends. — But in the Eye of That Supreme Being, to whom the Whole of our internal Frame is uncovered, Diſpoſitions hold the Place of Actions, and the moral State of the Mind is That which conſtitutes us good or evil in his Sight.

The Rectification of this, therefore, is the primary Object of religious Diſcipline; and in Proportion as this is more or leſs advanced, we are more or leſs religious. Accordingly, the Regeneration of the Heart is every where repreſented in the Goſpel as the moſt eſſential Requiſite in the Character of a Chriſtian.

Therefore, — III. Of the Reaſons diſſuading from this Vice. — And Firſt,

It is painful. — It is certain there is no Man, who retains the leaſt Senſe of Humanity, but wiſhes to live in a good Underſtanding with all Mankind, abſtracting from every Conſideration but the pleaſing Reflection that naturally ariſes in the Mind from ſuch a Situation.

The Reaſon of this we need not inquire at preſent: it is enough that every Man feels this SOCIAL Deſire ſo ſtrong in his own Heart.

Why then will any One chuſe to practiſe ſuch a ſtrange Sort of Self-denial as to rob his own Breaſt of ſuch pleaſurable Emotions, for no Reaſon but to rob his Fellow-creatures of the ſame? This is not only hindering Good, or, what amounts to the ſame, doing Evil for Evil's Sake, (the Temper of the moſt accurſed Spirit:) it is yet worſe; it is doing Evil to Ourſelves for the Sake of doing Evil to Others.

But, — "Is it not a Pleaſure to us when we rejoice at the Misfortunes of others; and therefore are we not ſtill, (it is ſaid,) in the Poſſeſſion of Pleaſure?"

A Pleaſure it is, but a Pleaſure ariſing from Paſſion only; a Pleaſure that will not endure the Teſt of Reaſon, or the Survey of Reflection; and therefore an unnatural, brutiſh, and ſavage Pleaſure: all which is evident from hence, that, when Time has in Part obliterated, and at laſt totally effaced the deformed

Image of Hatred, we find a thorough Complacency at the Retreat and final Farewell of ſo unwelcome a Gueſt. And this is ſtill further confirmed from the Joy that ariſes on the Reconciliation of Perſons at Variance: — What tumultuous Tranſports, (think ye,) muſt have filled the Hearts of Jacob and Eſau at their firſt Interview; when the Current of Brotherly Love had been ſo long interrupted between them? Take the Account of it in the inimitable Simplicity of ſcriptural Language.

"And Jacob lifted up his Eyes and looked, and "behold Eſau came, and Jacob bowed himſelf to the "Ground ſeven Times, until he came near to his "Brother; and Eſau ran to meet him, and embraced "him, and fell upon his Neck, and kiſſed him; "and they wept."

Were ever Revenge, Malice, or Hatred, accompanied with ſuch grateful Sentiments, ſuch kindly Overflowings of Joy and Gladneſs in the Heart? No: Benevolence, on ſuch Occurrences, aſſerts the Right of ſupreme Dominion in the human Conſtitution, and triumphs over all the Tribe of the unſocial Affections.

Tho' the Neceſſity, therefore, of a benign Diſpoſition, to our becoming real Chriſtians, be obligation ſufficient to quicken our Endeavours for the Attainment of it; yet if we reflect, but a Moment, on the

Happineſs

Happineſs which it brings, and the Diſquietude which the Want of it occaſions, we cannot but be ſtrongly induced to it. — For,

How happy is that Heart – how eaſy is that Life, how ſerene and earneſt is that Devotion, where true Love reigns! – How delightful is that Converſation which is accompanied with a mutual Good-will – how calm the Mind – compoſed the Affections – tranquil the Countenance – melodious the Voice – ſweet the Sleep – and full of Content the whole Life of him, who hath neither Hatred againſt others, nor ſuſpecteth any againſt him! whoſe Heart is ever open to the Commiſeration, and whoſe Hands are ever ready to the Relief, of others; and who wiſhes, (like the God he adores,) to be, and to do Good continually!

On the other Hand, — How ungrateful and unpleaſant a thing is it, to live in a State of Enmity, Hatred and Diſſenſion, the Heart overclouded with Diſcontent, and the whole Frame, both of Body and Soul, diſtempered; Self-diſcontent, and Hatred to others, preventing the Man forever from pouring forth one acceptable Prayer to God; or to our Lord, "the Prince of Peace and God of Love." — But further,

Hatred is not only painful in itſelf, but alſo prejudicial to others, as it naturally with-holds Men from all Offices of Kindneſs & Affection, and cheriſhes an

evil Diſpoſition towards their Neighbour. It inclines us to rejoice at the Misfortunes that befall him, or at leaſt, to be unconcerned for them. It reſtrains many Acts of our Benevolence towards him, when it would be equally our own Intereſt to perform them: – indeed, it may turn away our Eyes from him in the Day of his extreme Adverſity and Affliction, – and therefore is a ſure Mark of Incivility, and Want of Decorum, of a rough and unhewn Spirit, not as yet reduced from its natural Ferocity, nor poliſhed by Education, nor made gentle by civil Converſe.

But this is not all: a Mind thus diſpoſed, not only abſtains from doing Good, but too too frequently exerts itſelf in Evil; and when it does, is exceſſive therein; for, the Hatred, no leſs than "the Wrath, of Man, worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God."

Hatred ſeldom reſts in negative Evil; it is apt, from the very Nature of it, to exert itſelf in poſitive Acts of Malevolence. "Make the Tree good, (ſays our Saviour,) and its Fruit good; or make the Tree corrupt, and its Fruit corrupt; for a good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit; neither can a corrupt Tree bring forth good Fruit; wherefore, by their Fruits ye ſhall know them." Tho it may, for a Time, be concealed, and treaſured-up in the Heart, yet it may contain as much or more Malignity, than when it im-

mediately

mediately breaks out and diſcovers itſelf in contumelious Language, or Acts of outragious Violence: for, by brooding in the Mind, it becomes the Parent of every untoward Iſſue. – The Veil that is caſt over it, does not alter its real Complexion; it only enables it to act with leſs Suſpicion, and therefore with greater Security, when Opportunity offers. (*)

This, indeed, is not unaptly pointed out to us from the Order of the Words before us, where the Apoſtle ſeems not undeſignedly to have placed this Vice, as it is; but, on Purpoſe to ſhew that the following, [viz] "Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Striſe," and the like, are all of them the natural Conſequences of it: for "Luſt, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death." So that, if we will keep ourſelves free from the greateſt Sins, we muſt cleanſe that Fountain, the Heart, from whence all Evil proceeds. The

(*) Hatred concealed, may be as injurious as that which immediately diſcharges itſelf, and evaporates in a ſudden Flame. But the Guilt of the Malicious is aggravated in this, that he acts with more Deliberation. He has Time to debate the Matter cooly with himſelf, to call in the Counſels of Reaſon and Prudence, and to ſue for the Succours of Grace. All this he may do, and ought to do; and, if either thro a wilful Omiſſion of this, or in Deſpight of all the Remonſtrances of Reaſon and Conſcience, he ſtill perſeveres in the determined Reſolution of executing his wicked Purpoſe, his Sin, thus heightened with every Circumſtance of Preſumption, becomes exceeding ſinful.

The Tenor of our Actions will always correſpond to the Diſpoſitions that prevail within. To diſſemble, or to ſuppreſs them is a fruitleſs Attempt. In Spite of our Efforts they will perpetually break-forth in our Behaviour, for, "out of the Heart proceed not only evil Thoughts, but Murders, Adultries, Fornications, Theft, Falſe-witneſs, Blaſphemies."

In vain, therefore, ſhall we ſtudy to preſerve our Hands clean, unleſs we endeavour, previous to it, to keep our Heart pure. If that Fountain be once corrupt, we cannot expect ſalubrious Streams to flow from it. Thro' the Whole of their Courſe they will carry the original Taint; for, tho every natural Temper is innocent in itſelf; and may be made conducive to Virtue: yet, every Temper, at the ſame Time, is apt to degenerate into ſome Vice. To make the Temper ſubſervient to Virtue, or even to preſerve it innocent, Attention and Care, in reſtraining and moderating it, are abſolutely neceſſary; without which, we may be drawn into all the Vices ſuited to our Diſpoſitions; and thro them, occaſion all the Miſery to ourſelves and others, neceſſarily attending them.

Nothing more is neceſſary in this Caſe but to leave it to itſelf, and neglect to rule it; at leaſt, our becoming abandoned to theſe Vices, is the Conſequence of ſuch Neglect. — And,

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Need I point out minutely, or enter here into a long Detail of the deteſtible Vices which ſpring from the malevolent Paſſion before us. It will univerſally be confeſſed, that if not carefully corrected, it will produce Characters deſervedly odious. – It leads to Vices which ſpread Miſery thro Society, and which over-whelm the Perſon himſelf with greater Miſery, than he brings upon thoſe around him: It produceth Fretfulneſs on every the ſlighteſt Occaſion; putting Men out of Humour with every Perſon, and every thing; – it renders the whole Behaviour captious and perverſe; – it infects every Action with Harſhneſs and Bitterneſs; – it ſettles into Malice; – it grows up into Envy; – it exerts itſelf in Revenge; – it breaks forth into Rancour; – it degenerates into Cruelty; – it employs Power in creating Miſery, and ſpreading Deſolation; and takes Occaſion, even from Religion, for Perſecution and Murder. — For,

(As was further obſerved,) It not only leads Men into open Acts of Violence and Oppreſſion, but makes us exceſſive in them. — For,

He, who is driven to act by the Furiouſneſs of his Hatred, meaſures not the Actions of another by the true Standard of Equity, but purely from his own Malevolence. – For, Hatred and Self being at the Bottom, the Crime hath but little Concern in the Matter.

Witneſs the Inſtances already recited. Cain ſlew his Brother on this Account – Eſau comforted himſelf, purpoſing the like – Joſeph was ſold by his Brethren, as a Slave, into a ſtrange Land – Ahab impriſoned Miciah, and fed him with Bread and Water of Affliction; – and the Jews crucified our Saviour, denying the Lord that bought them.

Nothing is what it appears to be, when we are under the Power of this Paſſion; no Judgment which we then form, can be in the leaſt depended upon as ſound and true – The Fumes which ariſe from a Heart overcaſt with Hatred, never fail to darken the Underſtanding, and prevent it from rightly diſcerning the brighteſt Object. Every Paſſion juſtifies itſelf, and brings a thouſand Pretences to its Aid to hide its Deformity, and poſſeſſes a Sort of Power, by which it can magnify or diminiſh Objects at Pleaſure, and transform the Appearance of every thing: and Hatred is, by no Means, the leaſt of theſe.

But, the greateſt Diſſuaſive of all, from this evil Habit, is, the inevitable fatal Conſequence that will attend it hereafter.

If all the evil Habits which the Soul contracts in this World, whilſt united to the Body, continue after its Separation from it, (as we have all the Aſſurance they will,) then, a Mind, thus diſcompoſed, muſt be very

very unfit for the Society of Spirits who have no ſuch turbulent Paſſions; and for a Place in the Manſions of Love and Peace; from which, therefore, it will forever be excluded; For, it hath HERE a chief Place among "the Works of the Fleſh;" and we are elſewhere aſſured that "if we live after the Fleſh, we ſhall die." So that we have no other Choice left us, but either of retracting it, or of periſhing everlaſtingly.

Sermon

SERMON.

On Love, &c. the Oppoſite of Hatred.

Gal. v. 22. "But the Fruit of the Spirit is "Love." &c.

As "the Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh;" ſo it is with Reſpect to their Works and Fruits: "The Works of the Fleſh are manifeſt, which are theſe, Hatred, &c. – But the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Longſuffering, Gentleneſs, Meekneſs," and the like.

The Apoſtle, by contraſting theſe, and ſetting forth, in the firſt Place, the Properties of Evil, more effectually ſecures his Way to the Improvement of Virtue; and the more we endeavour to copy after theſe Examples, in our Enlargements on the ſame, the more Succeſs we may proportionally expect in all our Labours.

The Text, we ſee, (agreeable to that of the Apoſtle,) is a Virtue particularly oppoſed to the Vice already conſidered: It is a Virtue by no Means of leaſt

leaſt Value among Men; but rather of chief Eſteem, being here prefixed by the Apoſtle in the FIRST Rank of Chriſtian Graces, & "Fruits of the Spirit," which "are not only to the Praiſe and Glory of God;" but "are good and beneficial to Men."

It is the peculiar Glory of the Religion we profeſs, that at the ſame Time, that it tends to inform our Underſtandings, it meliorates our ſocial Nature, and with irreſiſtible Energy, inclines us to regard both God and Man with Sentiments of fervent Love.

The End and Deſign of Religion is to make Men wiſer and better; to improve, exalt, and perfect their Nature; to teach them to obey Love, to imitate God, and cauſe them to extend their Love, Goodneſs, and Charity to all their Fellow-creatures, according to their ſeveral Stations and Abilities.

This is the chief End and Deſign of Religion; and the *Principle* of Benevolence, (the Excellency of which we are now to conſider,) is, by our Lord, particularly repreſented to us as the great Characteriſtick of his Goſpel, being the immediate Dictate of that Good Spirit, which hath formed and eſtabliſhed the whole. — We ſhould, therefore, act wiſely, if we always eſtimated our Progreſs in it by the Practice of ſo benign and beneficial a Virtue. A Virtue ſo indiſpenſibly neceſſary to the Formation of the real

Chriſtian, that all other Acquirements, of whatever Nature they may be, are not of real Worth, if the Heart be found a Stranger to its Power.

The Religion of the Goſpel, tho ſupported by ſuch Evidence, as might juſtly demand Obedience to its Laws, chiefly aims at our Converſion, by the milder Powers of Perſuaſion, and a generous Appeal to the genuine Feelings of the uncorrupted Heart.

Next to the Worſhip of our Creator, "in Spirit and in Truth," it enjoins an Obedience to the moſt pleaſing Affections of our Nature, as our moſt eſſential Duty; and recommends the Principle of unlimited Benevolence, as That Principle from whence true Happineſs muſt always flow, and as the proper Motive and Incentive to every Action it approves.

In Conformity with its general Language, it delivers the Doctrine before us, and ſettles "Love," as the FIRST Fruit of the Spirit of God, and makes This the Characteriſtick of the Partakers of his Grace; "By this ſhall all Men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have Love one to another." But,

Will it not be urged, that the Sentiment on which this Doctrine is eſtabliſhed, is, in Fact, at Variance with the common Practice, as well as the prevailing Diſpoſition of Mankind.

Self is the Idol we adore in every Stage and Pe-

riod

riod of our Exiſtence. If Love be the Fruit of the Spirit; — If "by This only we are known to be Chriſt's Diſciples;" — if, "above all things," we are commanded to "have fervent Charity among ourſelves?" whence is it, that in early Life, the oppoſite Character reigns ſo univerſally in our Breaſts without Control? whence is it, that we ſacrifice the Eaſe of thoſe around us to every lawleſs Paſſion? our Powers of being agreeable and uſeful in our Generation, to the Gratification of Deſires, which at Length muſt render us not only hateful to others, but uſeleſs to ourſelves.

I might here, whilſt lamenting the Deficiency and Diſproportion of our Practice in this Virtue, point out the chief Cauſes and Occaſions of it, and endeavour to lay down ſuch Rules, as might ſeem conducive to the promoting of it. But the Grounds on which it is eſtabliſhed, — and the Manner how it is to be expreſſed, — together with the Uſe and Advantages of it, will, perhaps, be ſufficient in this Caſe. — And,

First, Of the Grounds and Reaſons on which this Duty is eſtabliſhed.

It is a Doctrine taught by Reaſon, and confirmed by Revelation, that Man is a SOCIABLE Creature: This is the original Order and Conſtitution of his

Nature, and their reciprocal manifold Wants and Neceſſities ſupply the Place of all Arguments to prove it: for no Man is ſufficient for his own Happineſs, nor can he live comfortably (I had almoſt ſaid, at all) without the Help and Aſſiſtance, the mutual Support and Preſervation of his Fellow-creatures. He is liable to many Evils, which he cannot redreſs; expoſed to many Wants, which he is not able to ſupply; and encumbered with many Deſires, which he knows not how to gratify.

In all theſe Reſpects he ſtands in Need of the Protection or Aſſiſtance of his Fellow-creatures: and the ſame helpleſs Condition being common to all Mankind, neceſſarily fixes the whole Species in a State of Dependance upon one another.

It is highly reaſonable, therefore, that a generous Love and Care for each other ſhould run through the whole Species, who are thus mutually dependant; for it is their trueſt Intereſt, and the moſt certain Steps, whereby they can promote their own Happineſs; for Love is the goodly Cement of Society, by which a kindly Warmth, thro' the Whole, is conveyed, and they are made eaſy and happy.

Hence it is, that they ever had Recourſe to Society, as the common Refuge of human Infirmities; where-

by

by a mutual Communication of Services, and Interchange of good Offices, they might obtain thoſe Comforts of Life which were not to be met with in Solitude. But, how could this Point be gained, or how ſhould Society turn to any Account, without thoſe kind Affections, and that friendly Diſpoſition, and Love, which we are conſidering? If Men were generally diſinclined to one another; if, inſtead of Love, Kindneſs, and Affability, they received each other with Averſion and Diſdain, if they were moroſe and unſociable, contentious and quarrelſome, prone to give Offence and commit Wrongs, and yet impatient of the leaſt Injury, and implacable in their Reſentments: if ſuch a Temper as This generally prevailed; who ſees not that Society would be a Curſe inſtead of a Bleſſing? Upon this Suppoſition the beſt and wiſeſt thing that Men could do, would be to break-up and diſperſe, to return into Solitude, and even hide themſelves in a Deſart. — But, without theſe Extremities, it is evident, that the Happineſs of any Community is diſturbed and diminiſhed in Proportion to the Unkindneſs and Ill-will that ariſe in it. And even a bare Indifference, as far as it extends, defeats the End of Society, and renders it uſeleſs to Mankind.

But further, — That we are obliged to love one another, appears from the NATURAL Bent & Tendency of human Nature.

To ſecure, in ſome Meaſure, the Obſervance of this neceſſary Duty, God has framed Men's Minds with ſuitable Propenſities, and engaged them by natural Inſtinct. They are naturally kind and good-natured Beings; they are born with kind Affections for each other, and cannot diveſt themſelves of them, without groſsly corrupting their Nature, and doing great Violence to their own Minds.

Conſcious of this Diſpoſition, we ſtile it HUMANITY, thereby not only allowing it to belong to our Nature, but appropriating it to our own Species. And we never ſhew ourſelves more to be Men, than when by Acts of Benevolence, we ſhew-forth the Excellency of our Nature.

It may not, perhaps, be needleſs to add, that the Object of theſe kind Inclinations is alſo unlimited. We are indeed too apt to reſtrain natural Affection to our Kindred, not only in the Signification of the Word, but in the Exerciſe of what it means; thereby contracting it into a very narrow Compaſs. But this is a Corruption of our Nature, as well as of our Language. For natural Affection certainly extends, (though in a different Degree,) to our whole Species, and prompts us to embrace Mankind with univerſal Good-will. — And,

That

That This is the inward Sense of Man, as to these things, (how stifled or dissembled he may be, with Regard to his own Behaviour,) is clearly seen in the Judgment he is wont to pass upon the like Conduct in another; The most proud, uncharitable, and contentious, (however he may favour the dear Bosom-criminal, himself,) will yet, with the just Severity of the sharpest Sentence, pursue the angry and contentious, the proud and ill-natured Part of Mankind; and will distinguish, by a just Applause and Commendation, those that are of meek and affectionate, peaceable and quiet Dispositions. — Again,

Another Ground of, and Obligation to this Duty, is from the Reasonableness and Equity of it.

That the due Esteem & Affections of our Fellow-creatures is a real Good, needs no other Proof than every Man's own Experience. If we consider it abstractedly from its beneficial Effects, even thus we may discover it to have an intrinsic Value; and that because it is naturally grateful to the Mind that possesses it, which of itself is a sufficient Reason for its being generally desired & prized. However, it becomes much more valuable by those Benefits and Services that flow from it. Esteem and Good-will are naturally accompanied with an Inclination to perform good Offices. Whenever, therefore, we are in Possession

of the former, we think ourſelves in ſome Meaſure entitled to the latter; and for the Sake both of the One and the Other, we all covet the Affections of other Men, and are deſirous of recommending ourſelves to their Favour and Friendſhip.

From hence it follows, by the plaineſt Rule of Reaſon and Equity, that we ought to bear Good-will towards them: for how can we expect that Others ſhould be well affected to us, if we be diſaffected, or even indifferent towards them? In like Manner, how can we pretend to receive Kindneſſes and Benefits, if we refuſe, on proper Occaſions, to confer them? Suppoſing Abilities and Opportunities equal, they muſt needs have the ſame Title to our good Offices, that we have to their's; becauſe no Reaſon or Plea can poſſibly be alleged by us, but what may equally be alleged by them. The Obligations, therefore, between us are, and muſt be, reciprocal; and by Conſequence all Men are obliged to be kindly affectioned and friendly to each other. — Again,

We are further bound to the Duty before us, in Imitation of the Nature of God, whoſe Definition, (according to St. John,) is, that he is "Love."

It was This that induced Him to ſend his Son into the World to redeem us; and it is This that moves Him to ſhower down on all his Creatures Bleſſings and

and Bounties in the greateſt Abundance, and is every Moment, thro this Affection, communicating Good, and diffuſing Happineſs thro a whole Univerſe.

It therefore plainly follows, that we cannot do ourſelves more Honour, or our Creator a more acceptable Service, than by a ſtudious Imitation of his moſt glorious Example, by bearing a kind Affection to all Men, and ſhedding abroad the benign Influence of it thro the whole Sphere of our Activity.

Thus forcible are the Reaſons, and thus ſtrong the Obligations we lie under, barely as we are Men, to love one another: But ſtill ſtronger are the Arguments, and ſtill greater our Obligations, as we are Chriſtians, to this Duty. Tho Reaſon and the Light of Nature inſtructs us much in this Duty, yet when we view ourſelves as Chriſtians, our Obligations hereto are carried to a much greater Height.

Thoſe Affections with which Nature and Reaſon jointly inſpire us, are by Chriſtianity exalted into Brotherly Love; we are not to look upon ourſelves as bound only by the Ties of Humanity; we are not to conſider our Fellow-Chriſtians barely as Partakers of the ſame Nature, but as Brethren, in the higheſt & moſt ſacred Senſe; as Members of the ſame Body, as Partakers of the ſame Redemption, and Co-heirs of everlaſting Life.

These Considerations bind us in a peculiar Manner to brotherly Love. And accordingly the Gospel constantly enjoins & inculcates it with great Strictness; exhorting us to suppress each rising Passion, which opposes itself to our Neighbour's Happiness, – to sacrifice our own Emolument to his Advantage, - and to subdue the hostile Spirit of the injurious Person, by accumulated Acts of undeserved Kindness.

Our Blessed Saviour hath, from a Law of Nature, passed it into a Revealed Law, and not only calls it "his Commandment," (*) but hath often repeated it, as tho it was his favourite Precept, and as tho he had the greatest Concern for it, and in a particular Manner rejoiced to see Men practise it. "A New Commandment, (saith he,) I give unto you, that ye LOVE one another." And to shew of what indispensible Obligation the Observance of it is to all Christians, he adds immediately in the next Verse, "By This shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love One to another." (i.e) By whatever other Sects may be distinguished; Be This the peculiar Badge & Cognizance of your professing my Religion, that ye sincerely and heartily love one another. Thereby plainly informing us, that it is not only an indispensible Duty, but a Virtue of the highest Rank, and the most essential Quality of a Christian. — And,

(*) John xv. 12. As

As Chriſt has given us ſuch Precepts concerning Love and Charity, ſo He was himſelf the higheſt and moſt perfect Example of it, that ever appeared in the World. "Greater Love than This hath no Man, than that a Man lay down his Life for his Friend; but God commendeth his Love towards us, in that while we were yet Sinners Chriſt died for us."

Whenever we ſeriouſly reflect, Who He was, and What we were, and conſider at the ſame Time what he did, and what he ſuffered, from firſt to laſt, for the ſinful and unworthy Race of Mankind; we immediately diſcover, that there never was upon Earth any Love like this; a Love ſo active, ſo intenſe, ſo unlimited, and ſo divine, that no Words are able to expreſs it, nor Thoughts conceive it. — And,

What He thus ſolemnly enjoined and practiſed, his Apoſtles do every where preſſingly inculcate. "This is the Meſſage, (ſay they,) that ye heard from the Beginning, that we ſhould love one another." And indeed, it is evident, that, from the Beginning to the End of their Miniſtry, they breathed nothing but the pureſt Love, and moſt fervent Charity. They earneſtly exhorted, and urged Men to it, and laid the utmoſt Streſs on it upon all Occaſions.

It is ſtiled by one Apoſtle, "The Royal Law;" it is repreſented by another, as "The End of the

"Commandment;" or, in other Words, as the main Scope and Drift of the Chriſtian Inſtitution. It is ſaid to be "The Bond of Perfectneſs," and "the fulfilling of the Law," and, (in the Text,) it hath the firſt Place among "the Fruits of the Spirit;" and, to fix it the deeper in our Minds, it is reckoned five Times over, under different Names, in the ſame Catalogue of Graces, [viz] "Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Meekneſs."

So that he that is deſtitute of this Virtue, can, by no Means, be a true Chriſtian, how confidently ſoever he may pretend to it: and this St Paul plainly aſſerts, "Though I ſpeak with the Tongue of Men and Angels, and have not Charity," (i.e. Love,) "I am become as ſounding Braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal;" (i.e) all my Pretences to Religion are vain and empty; "and tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all Myſteries and all Knowledge; and tho' I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, & have not Charity, I am nothing," nay, further yet, "tho I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing." — And,

The Reaſon why it is ſo much inſiſted on in the Chriſtian Inſtitution, is, becauſe it improves human Nature to the higheſt Degree it is capable of, and becauſe

cauſe it is the Temper and Genius of Heaven, and will alone prepare us for thoſe bleſſed Abodes.

Almoſt all other Graces and Virtues will then "be done away," as being no longer neceſſary, or capable of being practiſed: "whether they be Prophecies, they ſhall fail; whether they be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether it be Knowledge, it ſhall be done away; but Charity, (i.e. Love,) never faileth;" but will continue to be our Employment, and everlaſting Pleaſure and Delight.

How often, and how pathetically likewiſe, doth St. John, (the beloved Diſciple,) urge this Duty of Love and Charity! How doth he delight to dwell upon the dear Subject, as if it could never be exhauſted, or fail him here on Earth, more than it will hereafter in Heaven. He hath left the Love of our Brethren upon the ſame Ground with the Love we owe to God himſelf, and aſſures us, that they ſtand or fall together. "If any Man ſay, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him; for if he loveth not his Brother, whom he hath ſeen; how can he love God, whom he hath not ſeen? But if we love one another, his Love is perfected in us."

"This Commandment, therefore, have we from Him, that he who loveth God, muſt love his Brother alſo." — The Love of God and our Neighbour are

no more different than the Cauſe is from the Effect; or rather, it is but one and the ſame Habit in our Souls, exerciſed upon different Objects: we are to love God, for his own Sake; and our Neighbour, for the Sake of God: But ſtill, it is the ſame Principle from whence Both flow, [viz] the Love of Goodneſs perfect and entire in the One, and derivative in the Other — Thus ſtrict is our Religion in enjoining the Duty before us, and the Primitive Chriſtians were as remarkable for practiſing it, as the Apoſtles were for preaching it. — Which brings me to ſhew,

II. How this Love is to be expreſſed.

St. Paul gives us an excellent Rule to this Purpoſe; "Let Love be without Diſſimulation:" — and St. Peter, "See that ye love one another with a pure Heart, fervently."

It is not an hypocritical, or a languid and faint Good-will, that ſays only, "be ye warmed and filled," without giving wherewith to effect it, that will come up to the Senſe of theſe Words; but it muſt be an earneſt Endeavour at all Times to promote the Happineſs and Welfare of all Men, out of a pure Heart and undiſſembled Good-will. (*) "Let Love be without Diſſimulation: — See that ye love one another with a pure Heart, fervently:" (i.e) with the utmoſt Sincerity

(*) *Re opitulandum, non Verbis.*

and

and Truth; without any double Deſign or Reſerve; without any Goldneſs or Indifference; without any Variableneſs or Shadow of turning: — All which is more nobly and fully expreſſed in that excellent Deſcription of Love and Charity, given us by St. Paul. — "Charity (ſays he) ſuffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not, is not puffed up, doth not behave itſelf unſeemly, ſeeketh not her own, is not eaſily provoked, thinketh no Evil; rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Thus doth Charity teach us to be courteous and affable, to be of an obliging and gentle Deportment, and endearing Language to all Men; not to ſtart at the Shadow of an Injury, or to return Railing for Railing; but contrarywiſe Bleſſing.

When juſt Occaſion gives us Reaſon to be angry, Love makes us eaſy to be intreated, and will not ſuffer our whole Diſpleaſure to ariſe, or to ſhut up our Loving-kindneſs with it; but will make us forward to forgive, and willing and eaſy to be reconciled: (in a Word,) to have at Heart the Welfare and univerſal Happineſs of all Men, and to be ready to every good Work, that may in any Way contribute to it.

Theſe are the juſt Expreſſions of That Love which is the Fruit of the Good Spirit of God, and which

our Lord enjoins his Diſciples to exerciſe one towards another, and which he hath enforced by an engaging Precept, enforced from his own Example; "This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." His Love was as univerſal and extenſive as Mankind, daily over-flowing for their preſent, as well as future Good and Happineſs; and "greater Love than this hath no Man."

After the ſame Manner are we to love one another: "our Love muſt be without Diſſimulation," "not weary in well-doing," not varying according to the Ebbings and Flowings of uncertain Paſſion; but moving by the ſteady Rules of Reaſon and Religion, and that towards All Men.

Not that we are to imagine, (after all,) that we are bound to love all Men EQUALLY, or that all Men are to ſhare ALIKE in our Favour; no: There is a ſtrict Impoſſibility againſt it. It is certainly our Duty to love and to do good unto ALL Men, "but ESPECIALLY unto them that are of the Houſe-hold of Faith."

They that are of our Communion, of our Houſe-hold and Acquaintance, that are the moſt near and dear unto us, demand, muſt, and will have the Precedency in our Good-will and Performances.

We ought, indeed, to be ſo far from bearing Ill-will to any Man, of what Kind or Condition ſoever, that

we

we ſtand obliged to do him all the Service we can; and, (as far as in us lies,) to promote his temporal; but above all, his eternal Welfare. — To further and promote which, I ſhall proceed,

III. To ſhew the Value and Advantages hereof to the World in general, and to each of us in particular. — And firſt,

Of the Advantages of this Virtue to the World in general. And here, — The Importance of a ſocial Spirit to the Happineſs of Society, – The Neceſſity of mutual Friendlineſs among Creatures ſo mutually dependant, – of Compaſſion in a World ſo full of Miſery, – of a mild forgiving Temper amidſt ſo much Frailty and Ignorance, need not be proved; and, One would think, cannot eaſily be over-looked.

The heavieſt Sufferings of Life, doubtleſs, on Inquiry, will be found to flow from Want of Good-will, and Care to ſhow it.

What Felicity, therefore, would ariſe from Men's becoming univerſally reaſonable, humane, courteous, and friendly; attentive to the Intereſts & Inclinations, the Hopes & Fears, the Wants and Sorrows of one another.

A Society thus flouriſhing in Peace, & cemented by Love; where all the Members are inviolably attached to the public Good, and harmoniouſly conſpire in the

Service of it; where unfeigned Good-will, and undiſſembled Affection, univerſally prevail; where every Man is a ſincere Friend to every Man; in a Word, where all Men heartily and cheerfully exert themſelves in Acts of Kindneſs, and Labours of Love. What could be more beneficial, or more delightful, than ſuch a Temper & ſuch a Practice? What could ſooner, or better, or more effectually, advance and eſtabliſh the public Happineſs, & the Welfare of every Individual?

The very Idea of ſuch a Society carries a Proof along with it of the Point before us, and preſents to our View innumerable Pleaſures and Advantages, which, alas! we can only enjoy in Speculation.

Good-nature, tho expreſſed but in the ſlighteſt Intercourſes of Life, gives Pleaſure, and encourages to Duty; and what-ever hath an immediate, or continual Influence on the Happineſs of others, be it in ever ſo trifling Inſtances, muſt, on the Whole, have a much greater Effect than we are apt to imagine. Even in the leſſer Demonſtrations, therefore, of oblidging Condeſcenſion in Superiors, of Reſpectfulneſs and Deference in Inferiors, of Deſire to pleaſe, and Willingneſs to be pleaſed, amongſt Equals, are Matters highly worth regarding; Ways, in ſome, or other of which, we can every one of us be good to all around us: and it is the only Goodneſs, that moſt of them want from us. — And,

As

As ſuch a Diſpoſition has a happy Influence on Society, (which, in Fact, is always proportionable to the Prevalence of it,) ſo,

2dly, It produces ſuitable Effects in the Minds of all who are bleſſed with it. For,

Not to mention That Peace and Tranquility which muſt neceſſarily ariſe from the Abſence of many turbulent and tormenting Paſſions, (*) it may be laid down as a certain Truth, that ſo much Benevolence is, in Reality, ſo much Happineſs; every Exerciſe of it is naturally pleaſing to him who is truly poſſeſſed of it, and the higher it riſes, and the further it extends, the more delightful it becomes. Generous Sentiments and generous Actions are a perpetual Gratification to generous Spirits; and the charitable Man is ever feaſting on his own Charities. They often enjoy, in theſe Ways, a greater, and more exquiſite Pleaſure, than the moſt refined Voluptuary ever taſted.

Nothing

(*) The Indulgence of the Benevolent Affections forms our higheſt Happineſs, becauſe the Heart, which is animated by them, is a Stranger to Perplexity & Care. Thoſe tumultuous Paſſions, in whoſe ſad Retinue are found Diſorder, Confuſion, & Deſpair, are unknown where the gentler Form of Benevolence bears Sway. Pride, Avarice, Anger, and Revenge, bow down before her; they are huſhed in ſoft Repoſe; like the Beaſts of the Night, when the Sun ariſeth, they get them away together, and lay themſelves down in their Dens.

Nothing ſure is more agreeable in the Practice, or pleaſing in the Reflexion than the ſincere Performance of it. To be in Love with all Men, and to manifeſt it, by relieving him that is in Miſery, is the trueſt Relief to him that doth it; and to ſubdue an Enemy by Patience and Forgiveneſs, is a moſt agreeable Conqueſt. But the good Man's Satisfaction is not confined within the narrow Sphere of his own Abilities. Whatever good is done, or whatever good is received, if it fall within the Compaſs of his Obſervation, or come to his Knowledge, he enjoys it in Reflection, and it becomes a real Addition to his own Happineſs. The very Bleſſings of Heaven that deſcend every where in ſuch Plenty and Profuſion, all adminiſter to his Comfort, and contribute to the Increaſe of his Treaſure. Wherever they may directly fall, they are ſure to rebound upon him; foraſmuch as he continually rejoices at them, and is ever well-pleaſed with his Neighbour's Succeſs. In ſhort, he thus partakes of all the Proſperity that he ſees or hears of, and is a Sharer of every Man's Joy. — Not to add, that, as Hatred with-holds us from all good Offices, and makes us exceſſive in Evil; ſo Love, in the very Nature of it, will induce and conſtrain us to every good Work, and by this Means, in the reciprocal Exchange of Love and good Offices, and adding Happineſs to others, we thereby increaſe our own.

To

To this Advantage of the Virtue before us, let us add alſo the Excellency of it. And moſt certainly nothing can be more agreeable to the Dignity of our Nature, nothing can more improve or adorn our Minds, nothing can raiſe them to a higher or nobler Pitch. What can be better, what more amiable, than kind Affections and worthy Actions? Thoſe ſhining Characters in Hiſtory, which have been tranſmitted down from Age to Age with ſo much Applauſe, and have charmed every Reader; What Ingredients do they conſiſt of? Are they not made-up of Benevolence, Kindneſs, Humanity, Generoſity, Public-ſpirit, and the Love of Mankind? Animated by ſuch Principles as theſe, the Benefactors of Antiquity performed the moſt illuſtrious Actions, ſurmounting all Difficulties, and cheerfully ſacrificing Wealth, Eaſe, Liberty and Life itſelf, to the Public-Good.

What Wonder, then, if ſuch Names be covered with Glory, and attract the Admiration of all Poſterity? And in Truth, there is ſomething ſo beautiful and lovely in Beneficence and Kindneſs, that all Men of honeſt and undepraved Minds are naturally delighted with ſuch eminent Examples of them.

But the Excellence of this Temper chiefly conſiſts in its Conformity to the Nature & Perfection of God himſelf, who is Love: whom to follow is no leſs our

Glory here, than it will be our Happineſs hereafter.

Whatever is the beſt Imitation, and the neareſt Reſemblance of this Goodneſs that Men are capable of, muſt needs be moſt worthy, and moſt excellent, and conduce in the higheſt Degree to the raiſing, improving, and accompliſhing our Natures. And This is the very Caſe of the Virtue here treated of, certainly Nothing can be more divine than Love and Charity, nothing more godlike than doing Good. From whence we may juſtly conclude, not only that it is God's Will we ſhould imitate him herein, but that we ſhould be particularly careful to attain ſo great an Excellence, and to arrive at ſo divine a Perfection.

"See then, that ye love one another with a pure Heart, fervently;" and "as we have Opportunity, let us do Good unto all Men," "for theſe things are good and profitable unto Men."

Sermon

SERMON —

Againſt Strife, Contention, Quarreling, &c.

Prov. x. 12. "Hatred ſtirreth up Strife."

Having already conſidered the natural Tendency of Hatred to ſtir-up Strife, (*) I ſhall now, from the Words before us, proceed to conſider Strife itſelf; only premiſing, how neceſſary it is rightly to diſtinguiſh Cauſes and their Effects: for, from the right Knowledge of theſe it is, with the proper Uſe of the Means to prevent the natural Conſequences of them, that we can hope to maintain our Innocence in all Events: — Thus, in the preſent Caſe; if "Hatred ſtirreth up Strife," the only ſure Way to keep ourſelves free from this Evil, is to pluck up from our Hearts the evil Root from whence all Wrath, Strife, and the like do naturally procced. (‡) "Hatred ſtirreth up Strife; but Love covereth all Sins." — In ſpeaking to this Vice, I ſhall,

Firſt, Shew the Nature, and evil Conſequences of it.

(*) The preceeding Vice; Page 1.

(‡) Remove the Cauſe, and the Effect will ceaſe.

And

And then, — Secondly, The Means to prevent it.

As to the Nature of this Vice, much need not be ſpoken, neither indeed can be; it being rather to be conceived than expreſſed: ſave, that as it is the Diſquiet of Kingdoms, and Confuſion of Parties; ſupplanting of Peace and Quietneſs, and Security among Men, and planting in its Stead all Sedition and Tumults, with every Diſorder, that is deſtructive, either to the Ornament or Happineſs of human Life; for, "where Strife and Envying is, there is Confuſion and every evil Work."

With Regard to the ill Conſequences of this Sin, they are of ſo complicated a Nature, that a particular and minute Detail of them, would not only be tedious, but impoſſible; as it is differently exemplified, according to the different Degrees in which it is encouraged, and according to the different malign Diſpoſitions of thoſe in whom it is fomented.

Who, but according to the various Opportunities offered him, can help obſerving the horrible and exceeding Deformity of Viſage thoſe are ſubject to, who are actuated by it! — what Agonies of Mind, — what Diſorder of Spirits, — what Fury and Frenzy it hurries a Man into! — More particularly we are to add to theſe, the Multitude of Evils attending on it.

Defamation

(*) See this Irregularity of the Pages accounted for, in the 1ſt Page of the Contents, Vol. vii.

Defamation is its least ill Attendant; and the Ill-will of every serious Opponent (*)

Not to mention that we thereby gain to ourselves the Scorn and Contempt of every Beholder, who will point us out as a Proverb of Reproach to be avoided of all Men.

These are but few of the many ill Consequences which naturally retort upon the Fame and Reputation of him who is of a contentious Spirit.

The Evils of it are no less hurtful to the Body. — "Who hath Wounds? who hath Maiming? who hath putrifying Sores? even He that is fond of Strife, and who seeketh Contention as for his Treasure." (†)

Men who are factious, contentious, and violent usually bring many Calamities upon themselves, which in the End, perhaps, may terminate in their Ruin. (‡) — At least,

They are continually involved in Feuds and Animosities, ever hating and hated, giving and receiving Injuries; & perhaps die at last in the same unfriendly Disposition. (§) Nor

(*) *Odium findit Amicitiam.* "Hatred stirreth up Strife; but Love covereth all Sins." (*)

(†) *Cutem carit lacerata Canis mordax.*

(‡) *Concordiâ parvæ Res crescunt; Discordiâ autem maximæ dilabuntur.*

(§) Hatreds are generally so durable and obstinate, that the

Glory here, than it will be our Happineſs hereafter.

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(u) *Concordiâ parvæ Res crescunt; Discordiâ autem maximæ dilabuntur.*

(w) Hatreds are generally so dreadful and obstinate, that the

Not to add, that many Times, even in a natural Way, "the End of these things is Death;" and Men are hurried out of the World in the midst of Wrath; most assuredly a very unfit Condition to appear in, at the great and terrible Day of Judgement?

No Man can tell to what Lengths Strife encouraged may arrive. It is the Observation of the wise Man, that "the Beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water;" and therefore very prudently, as well as kindly, cautions us, to "let go Contention before it be medled with," (*)

As Water, (having Vent,) runneth apace, and maketh the former Breach still wider; so doth the Contention of him that is of an hasty Spirit."

Though, therefore, the Evil of Strife be but SMALL at the Beginning, (as God knows it but seldom is,) yet, in a little Time, it may arrive to a great & prodigious Height, and be the Instrument and Occasion of the blackest Sins. It is the Apostle's greatest Sign of Death in a sick Person, is his Desire of being reconciled to his Enemies.

(*) Quarrels are often raised about the merest Trifles; and yet, when once begun, are with the greatest Difficulty imaginable brought to a friendly Conclusion: for, "as the Vapour and the Smoke of a Furnace goeth before the Fire, so the Reviling before Blood."

tle's Observation? — Behold how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth! (*)

These are Evils which immediately respect a Man's self. — But,

This is not all; it may be, and as frequently is, the Occasion of as much Evil to Others, and for which we shall be wholly answerable, if throughout Offence) though at the same Time truly destructive, and of the most pernicious Consequence to the unfortunate (‡)

(‡) These, in themselves, even in this Life, (one would think,) are Reasons fully sufficient to dissuade from it. Disquiet, Dislike, and an evil Name are

(*) Quarrels are more easily begun, than ended.

Ut è parvâ Scintillâ, magnum aliquando oritur Incendium: Ità, ex Linguâ, minuto Membro, magnæ sæpè oriuntur Rixæ et Discordiæ.

Injuria magis extinguenda est, quàm Incendium. Ex levissimis Offensis, si negligantur, nascuntur atroces Tragœdiæ.

It mattered not how small the Grain, so but continual be the Train

Ut haud extinctus Cinerem è Sulphure tangas,
Vivet, et ex minima maximus Ignis erit.
Ergò, cavete Viri, ne sit Sententia discors:
Ludus enim genuit trepidum Certamen et Iram;
Irà truces Inimicitias, et funebre Bellum.
Ubi plus est Periculi, ibi major adhibenda est Cautio.

(‡) *Difficiles Mores sunt molesti, tùm iis, qui eos habent, tùm iis, quorum Consuetudine utuntur: Mansuetudo verò non in Animantibus, et Hominibus, et cæteris Rebus omnibus, sed in Diis quoque celebratur.*

are what we generally wish to avoid. But,

There are many Considerations, besides the present ill Consequences attending the Vice before us, wherefore to avoid it.

The very Frame and Make of our Constitution, together with that Reason which is given us for our Guidance in all our Affairs, should induce us to a different and more courteous Demeanour. (*)

We are of savage Cast; we might then well be allowed the Ferocity of our Nature; (†) But for Men, of so noble a Make, and endued with Reason, (‡) such an exceeding Mildness is expected from them, and that, towards All Men: "If ye, then, bite and devour one another, take-heed that ye be not consumed one of another:" — But further,

As no Vice is more mischevous in its own Nature, or more destructive of the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, than Strife and Contention, and is also so thoroughly against our Reason and Ingenuity; so nothing is more directly contrary to the End and Design of That Religion which our blessed Saviour

(*) Man is by Nature, a mild and gentle Being, and cannot by true Religion be made fierce and cruel.

(†) *Arma unicuique Deus attribuit, Aquilæ magnam Celeritatem, Robur Leonibus, Cornua Tauris, Aculeos Apibus, innatum Tutamen dedit; at* Ratio *Propugnaculum ipsi Homini - Telum omni Telo potentius.*

Such a Temper to establish in the World. (*)

This, above all things, labours to inspire Peace and Good-humour, Love and Tenderness, Meekness and mutual Respect towards all Men; Virtues these, that make Society useful, and Conversation sweet and easy. — But, These can never consist with those fretful and fiery Dispositions which flame out into Passion upon every Trifle, and, where Justly provoked, exceed beyond Measure.

St. Paul, in his Charge to Timothy, expresly enjoins, that "the Servant of the Lord must not strive;" and though these Words are more peculiarly to be understood of those that are in Charge over the Church; yet, the Apostle likewise requires the same thing of all Christians in general. For, He bids Titus to put those under his Care in Mind, that "they speak Evil of no Man; that they be no Brawlers, but gentle, shewing all Meekness to all Men." "If therefore ye have bitter Strife and Envyings in your Hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth;" "This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." — "The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God."

(*) Malice is the ordinary Vice of those, who live in the Mode of Religion, without the Spirit of it. Serm. CXII.

No marvel, then, that the Apostle, after the Mention of these things, expressly says, that they who do them "shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The Apostle, by styling these "the Works of the Flesh," plainly intimates the Malignity of their Nature, and the final Tendency of them; but, lest any One should mistake in a Case so evident, he positively and plainly asserts, (as he had already told them in Times past,) that "they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God."

The final Issue of these things is not only the Deprivation of all Happiness, but also the being adjudged to endless and interminable Misery: "They who do these things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God;" and again, "The End of these things is Death."

As we shall hereby be secluded from the peaceable Enjoyments of this Life, so shall we be also, if we continue therein, from the blissful Ravishments of a better. — For,

"The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink," (things which we here so often contend for,) "but Righteousness, Peace, & Joy in the Holy Ghost." "All things that offend or hurt will be gathered out of that holy Mountain."

" to the Means whereby to avoid these things, they are briefly, the Avoiding the contentious Person; or, if that is not possible, then, the giving him a soft Answer in Meekness and Truth; and so avoid all unruly Life, which do in a special Manner, disturb the Peace of Mankind.

The first of these is always to be observed, if possible. — For, "The Wicked go about stirring up Strife all the Day long." Only, therefore, can we be secure from their Danger when we are at Distance from their Contagion.

The Apostle is particularly urgent in this, charging us, that "if any be a Railer, or contentious, with such an one, not even to eat." — And,

The Reason is truly evident, lest we be caught by their Infection, or share in their general Malevolence, for "as Coals are to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire; so is a contentious Man to kindle Strife. Therefore, "Kindle not the Coals of a Sinner, lest thou be burnt up in the Flame of his Fire."

But, — As the present State of Affairs are in the World, these things cannot ALWAYS be, but we must, in Despite of our utmost Care, sometimes converse with Men of an evil Heart: It will therefore be no mean Piece of Wisdom, in us, to fortify ourselves at all Times against them in all Meekness and Submission.

(2 C 2) The

The wise Man hath very justly observed, that "a soft Answer turneth away Wrath, but grievous Words stir up Anger."

Agreeably whereto, is that Advice of St. Peter's, "Be ready always to give an Answer, with Meekness and Reverence; that those who speak Evil of you, and accuse you, may be ashamed."

A calm and gentle Way of vindicating ourselves is the most effectual Means to work Confusion in such as would calumniate and reproach us, Nothing so wins upon the Obstinate, and melts the most Obdurate, like mild and gentle Usage: (*) Even Silence, when it shews Submission and not Sullenness, is more apt to persuade, than angry Arguments, used in Opposition. There is a mighty Force in

(*) The Art of managing Humours, and of gaining our Ends upon Men, is, to find out their weak Side. There is no Man that has not his predominant Passions, and these Passions are different, according to the Diversity of Tempers. All Men are indolent, some of Honour, others of Interest, and most of their Pleasures. The Skill is first to know the Character of the Person, next to feel his Pulse, and then to attack him by his strongest Passion, which is his weakest Side.

The Knowing of Others well, is a fair Step to gain an Ascendant and Mastery over them; for the Man that is thoroughly known, depends, in some Measure, upon the Person that knows him. "Assent, therefore, as thou canst, guess at thy Neighbour, and consult with the Wise." The rich Man is wise in his own Conceit, but the poor Man that hath Understanding, searcheth him out.

a Sense of Shame, and Gratitude, and Honour. (*)

There are many Proofs in holy Writ to the Purpose before us. — Esau was a rough Man as well in his inward Disposition as outward Behaviour; and it is probable, by his bringing Four hundred Men with him, that he came with a full Purpose of being

(*) Humility, Patience, and fair Speech are the Pacifiers of Wrath and Anger. — *Ut Aqua tepida Inflammationes, sic Oratio Clementiæ plena, Iram refrigit. Si infers in Scintillam Ignis, excitas Incendium, rursus ea servo si insputes, extinguis illum; sic amicis Verbis Odium atque Iracundia extinguuntur: amaris autem totum excitatur Incendium. Dormientem Leonem ne excita.*

Friends must be preserved with good Deeds, and Enemies pacified with fair Words. Urbanity and Civility are a Debt we owe to Mankind; Civil Language and good Behaviour will be like perpetual Letters commendatory to us. Other Virtues have need of somewhat to maintain them, Justice must have Power, Liberality, Wealth, &c. But This needs only a few pleasant Looks, good Words, and no evil Actions. — It is an easy Purchase, when Friends are gained by Kindness and Affability.

Lenitate nihil est Flamini melius, neque Clementia. Nihil est tam Ferum, nihil tam Ferox, quod non Placabilitate atque Clementia Humanitas et gratior ac tutior

Cede repugnanti, cedendo victor abibis.

Yielding pacifieth great Offences.

When our Hatred is too fierce, it subjects us to the Persons we injury thereat. He that can apply calm and yielding Words, is too hard for him. Use soft Words, and strong Arguments; for soft Words sometimes worketh upon the hardest Heart. A mild Answer to an angry

being revenged on his Brother, according to his former Resolution. — But,

How did the mild and humble Expressions of Jacob, in styling him LORD, and himself a SERVANT, soften the rugged, and otherwise inflexible Disposition of Esau; insomuch, that, instead of taking Revenge, he offers Kindness unto him. — Again,

Of what Kind of Temper was Saul? — how full of Passion, Fierceness, Cruelty, and Enmity was he against Man; is like Water cast upon the Fire, it abateth his Heat, and from an Enemy he will become our Friend.

—— —— Peragit tranquilla Potestas
Quod violenta nequit. —— ——
Clementia plus valet quam Violentia. — Benignitate atque Clementia Hostem vinceri, quam Armis præstat;
Et Quis non voluit blandis accedere Dictis?
Mansuescere Feræ, et Vultus posuêre minaces,
Nemo adeo ferus est, ut non mitescere possit.

Indulgence soon takes with a noble Mind:
Who can be harsh, that sees another kind?

Patience softens Wrath. — Sweet Language will multiply Friends.

The Charms of Kindness are irresistible; they conquer, captivate, and return in Triumph over the Affections of all Men. — *Quemadmodum Solis Jubar, ut primùm apparet, fugat Tenebras: Item, Clemens et Benignus sui Præsentia Res turbulentas componit, et quietas et tranquillas reddit.* — "Pleasant Words are as an Honey-comb, sweet to the Soul, and Health to the Bones." — Gentle and prudent Reply to indecent and scurrilous Language, is the most severe, tho' innocent Revenge.

"A patient Man will bear for a Time, & afterward Joy shall spring up unto him. He will hide his Words for a Time, and the Lips of many shall declare his Wisdom."

against David? — And, how impatiently he desired, and thirsted after his Ruin, is evident from his secret Undermmings of and open Pursuit after him; Yet, This harsh and cruel Disposition of his, was strangely wrought upon by the mild and humble Carriage of David, who refused even an Opportunity to hurt him, when it was in his Power, styling him, "his LORD & FATHER," — "the Lord's Anointed," and "King of Israel." — This had such Effect upon him, that he melted into Tears of Kindness and Compassion; he acknowledged him for a Son, and committed to him, as to his dearest Friend, the Care of his Posterity.

The Time would fail me to speak of the Men of Ephraim, (*) of Eli, (†) and of David (‡) also, who were all "subdued through Kindness."

What is here observed, is founded in the Nature and Reason of things, and we may appeal to every Man's Observation for the Truth of it.

"He, then, that is slow to Anger is better than the Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit than he that taketh a City;" the One shewing only Strength of Body, the Other, of Mind. (†) But,

(*) Judg. viii. 1. &c. (†) 1 Sam. iii. 19. (‡) 1 Sam. xxv. 30, &c.

(†) *Quamobrem libera est Anima, et Domina Potestatum, virtutes dicas, sive elementum omnium Literarum prima et optima.* — Ut trahe

Serm. Coeli.

But further. — Another and very useful Method hereto, is, to forego all our unruly Lusts.

It is the Apostle's Observation, "whence, (says he,) *Ira sæpit, qui sibi non sapit; Iræ, & usitæ vindictæ, qui telipsum non vincit.* — *Effugere Cupiditates regium est, Auaritiam, Iram, cæteraque Animi commoti Affectus vincere, plus est, quàm Regnum.* — *Si quis liberalem illum Animi Pacem & Tranquillitatem, quæ non emitur aut venditur ullo Pretio, quæque movere aut concutere nihil potest, vincit & coarcet Animi Perturbationes; Metum, Iram, Cupiditatem. Fortior est illis qui Cupiditates, quàm qui Hostes vincerent.* — *Si quit tibi etiam subjicere, subjicit Fortuna; multos reges, si te Ratio regat. Vis Regnum tibi dari magnum? Rege TELIPSUM.*

A Wise Man is a great Monarch, He has an Empire within himself; Reason commands in chief, & all his Passions, like obedient Subjects, obey: and tho' the Territories seem but small and narrow, yet the Command and Royalty is great: for, where Reason ruleth, Appetite obeyeth. — *Latius regnat avidum domando Spiritum;*

Quàm si Lybiam remotis Gadibus jungas;
Si uterque Pœnus serviat Uni. —

Our Passions are like the Seas, agitated by the Winds; and, as God has set Bounds to these, so should we to these: Hither to shalt thou come, and no further.

The Foundation of a good Government over a Man's self, is to be had in the Command of the Passions. A good Life is aptly compared to Musick, for they who make Virtue the Scope of their Actions, proceed in Harmony and Order. The Conquest of Passion gives infinitely more Happiness than we can from the Satisfaction of it; for curbing our Desires is the greatest Glory we can arrive at in *this* World, and will be the most rewarded in the next.

It is more glorious to overcome our Passions, than our Enemies: for if they are bad, we ought not to be Friends with them; and if they are good, they will not be long Enemies to us.

be] comes Strife & Contentions among you? Come they not from hence, even of your Lusts which war in your Members?" The unruly Lusts of Men, when let loose in Quest of their different Objects, cannot fail, in their various malign Inclinations, of running counter and meeting with Others who will be equally eager in their Pursuits, and as impatient of Restraint under any Opposition. (*) And,

What the Consequence of this must be, is too obvious to need here any Enlargement; since they as they cannot both obtain it, they will each consent for the Preference (†) Let

(*) Quarrelsome Persons often meet with their Match. He that is *Argumentosus* in his own Story, may meet with another as *argumentosus* in the Contradiction of it; and then the two Sir POSITIVES must have a Skirmish. *Et vehementi edito vehemens optime convenitur. Mutilatum Naſum leones, &c.*

(†) *Omnium Malorum Radix eſt Cupiditas, Transgreſſionis Mater, Magiſtra recedi. Principalia Inimicitiæ Amicis, Malitiæ, Civiles Tumultus, Seditionis Origo. Ex Cupiditatibus, Odium, Diſſidia, Diſcordiæ, Seditiones, Bella naſcuntur.* — And I

It is obſerved that the Young, and the Ignorant are always the moſt Violent in Purſuit. The Knowlege which is forced upon them by longer Acquaintance with the World moderates their Impetuoſity. Let them ſtudy, therefore, in an eſpecial Manner to anticipate, by Reflection, That Knowledge, which Experience often purchaſes at too dear a Price. Let them inure themſelves to frequent Conſideration of the Emptineſs of thoſe Matters which excite ſo much Strife and Contention among Men. Let them think how much more of true Enjoyment is loſt by the Violence of Paſſion, than by the Want

Let us, then, ſtudy, in the FIRST Place, to acquire juſt Views of the comparative Importance of thoſe Objects, that are the moſt ready to attract Deſire. — For, by rectifying our Opinions of them, we ſhall ſtrike at the Root of the Evil. — Indeed,

The Exceſs of every Paſſion will be moderated by frequent Meditations on the Vanity of the World, the ſhort Continuance of Life, the Approach of Death, Judgment and Eternity. The imaginary Degree of Importance which the Neglect of ſuch Meditation ſuffers us to beſtow on temporal things, is one great Cauſe of our Vehemence in Deſire, and our Eagerneſs in Purſuit. We attach ourſelves to the Objects around us, as tho we could enjoy them forever. Whereas, higher and more enlarged Proſpects of the Deſtination of Man would naturally cool our miſplaced Ardour. For, what can appear ſo conſiderable in human Affairs, as to diſcompoſe or

of thoſe things which give Occaſion to it; — Let them perſuade themſelves that the Favour of God and Poſſeſſion of Virtue form the chief Happineſs of the rational Nature? and, that a contented Mind, & peaceful Life, hold the next Place in all true Eſtimation. Theſe are the Concluſions which the wiſe and thinking Part of Mankind have always formed. To theſe Concluſions, after having run the Race of Paſſion, they will probably come at the laſt. By forming them betimes, they make a reaſonable Eſcape from that tempeſtuous Region; thro' which ſome in paſs without ſuffering Miſery, contracting Guilt, and undergoing ſevere Remorſe.

or elate the Mind of him to whose View Eternity lies open, and all the Greatness of the Universe of God? How contemptible to him will seem the Hurry of Spirits, and Toil of Passions, about things which are so soon to end?

Where are they who once disturbed the World with the Violence of their Conquests, and filled it with the Renown of their Exploits? What now remains of their Designs and Enterprizes, of their Passions and Pursuits, of their Triumphs and their Glory? The Flood of Time has past over them, and swept them away, as tho' they had never been.

"The Fashion of the World" changes continually around us; we succeed one another, like Troops of Pilgrims on their Journey. Absurdly we spend our Time in contending about the Trifles of a Day, while we ought to be preparing for a higher Existence.

Eternity is just at Hand to close this introductory Scene. It is fast rolling towards us like the Tide of a vast Ocean, ready to swallow up all human Concerns, and to leave no Trace behind it, except the Consequences of our good or bad Deeds which will last for ever. (*) How

(*) When I look upon the Tombs of the Great, every Emotion of Envy dies in me; when I read the Epitaphs of the Beautiful, every

How inconsiderable, in this View, do those Broils appear, in which we had been long involved, and those Contests and Feuds, which we thought would never have an End!

The awful Moment that terminates them, makes us feel their Vanity. If there be a Spark of Humanity left in the Breast, the Remembrance of our common Fate must then awaken it. Is there a Man, who, if he were admitted to stand by the Death-Bed of his bitterest Enemy, and beheld him enduring that Conflict which human Nature must suffer at the last, would not be inclined to stretch forth the Hand of Friendship, to utter the Voice of Forgiveness, and to wish for perfect Reconciliation with him before he left the World? Who is there that when he beholds the Remains of his Adversary deposited in the Dust, feels not, in that Moment, some Relentings

inordinate Desire goes out; - when I meet with the Grief of Parents upon a Tomb-stone, my Heart melts with Compassion; - When I see the Tombs of the Parents themselves, I consider the Vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow; - when I see Kings lying by those who deposed them; when I consider rival Wits, placed side by side, or the Holy Men that divided the World with their Contests and Disputes, I reflect with Sorrow and Astonishment on the little Competitions, Factions and Debates of Mankind; - when I read the several Dates on the Tombs, of some that died Yesterday, and some for Ages before, I consider that great Day, when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.

sentiments of the Remembrance of those past Animosities, which mutually embittered their Life?

Let the Anticipation of such Sentiments, serve now to correct the Inveteracy of Prejudice, to cool the Heat of Anger, and allay the Fierceness of Resentment.

How unnatural is it for Animosities so lasting to possess the Hearts of MORTAL Men, that nothing can extinguish them, but the cold Hand of Death? Is there not a sufficient Proportion of Evils in the short Span of human Life, that we seek to increase their Number, by rushing into unnecessary Contests with one another? When a few Suns more have rolled over our Heads, Friends and Foes shall have retreated together, and their Love and their Hatred be equally buried. Let our few Days, then, be spent in Peace. While we are all journying onwards to Death, let us rather "bear one another's Burdens," than harrass one another by the Way. Let us smooth & chear the Road as much as we can, rather than fill the Valley of our Pilgrimage with the hateful Monuments of our Contention & Strife. Let such Reflections allay the Heat of Passion, and reduce all human things to their proper Standard. From frivolous Pursuits, let them recall our Attention to the Objects of real Importance; to

the proper Business of Man; to the Improvement of our Nature, the Discharge of our Duty, the rational and religious Conduct of human Life.

What I have already said respects Strife, as existing between Ourselves and Others. And,

If This be so evil a thing, even where our Interests may sometimes be the Occasion; what, and how great must its Sin and Deformity be in those who make it their Amusement to sow Strife & Contention among their Neighbours, (*) whilst themselves, the Promoters, are the amused Observers of other's Aggravation! of which Sort there are but too many in the World; but, this is to chuse Evil for its own Sake, as such, and is contrary to every End, and all the Intents and Injunctions of Religion, which is to increase and promote Peace among ourselves and all Men, as far as in us lies, to the mutual Good of Mankind in general; the which to frustrate by Strife and Contention, or by our evil Commotions of others, is therefore a sure Sign of a rough and unhewn Spirit, not as yet reduced from its natural Ferocity, nor polished by Education, nor made

(*) *Difficultatem, & Dissensionem, & Discordiam ejusmodi amaris.*
Incendisque Animum Dictis, atque Aggeras Iras.

made gentle by civil Converſe: (*) — Again, "This Vice is one of the ſeven things," taken Notice of by Solomon, as an Abomination to the Lord, [viz] "Him that ſoweth Diſcord among Brethren." The Apoſtle therefore adviſes us to "mark thoſe which cauſe Diviſions amongſt us, and avoid them."

This Vice and Practice, then, is truly diabolical; for, as the reconciling Enemies is the Work of God, ſo the ſeparating Friends is the Work of the Devil. (‡)

To Conclude: As Strife is ſo turbulent a Vice, and ſo deſtructive to the Peace and Quiet of all Societies, it is hoped, that a due Conſideration of the Thing itſelf, together with what hath been here laid down, will be ſufficient to induce us to "lay aſide all Bitterneſs and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil-ſpeaking, with all Malice;" as knowing, that "it

(*) *Quid intereſt, utrùm ex Homine ſe convertat quis in Belluam, an in Hominis Figurâ Immanitatem gerat Bellux?*

(‡) We ſhould make Peace among our Neighbours; It is a worthy and reputable Action, and will bring juſter and greater Commendations on us, and more Benefit to thoſe with whom we converſe, than Wit or Learning, or any of thoſe ſo much admired Accompliſhments.

Speak Peace; where Diſcord reigns, appeaſe the Flood;
And, for Revenge, perſiſt in doing Good.

See Rom. xii. 20, 21. Serm. CXII.

" it is the Glory of a Man to paſs over a Tranſgreſſion," and " an Honour to ceaſe from Strife;" and that, upon the Experience we have had of the Miſchief of mutual Exaſperations, we may now apply ourſelves to the moſt effectual Means for compoſing the Spirits of Men, and healing their Differences; that laying-aſide all other Provocations, we may make This our Study and Delight; to " conſider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to good Works." (*)

(*) See Knox's Eſſays No. 109. On the Cauſes and Folly of Diſſenſions in a Country Village.

Sermon

SERMON CXIII.

On Gentleneſs, Meekneſs, &c. the Oppoſite of Strife.

Titus iii. 2. — "Gentle, ſhewing all Meekneſs "unto all Men."

Benevolence, Good-nature, and Affability towards all Men, are Virtues by no Means of leaſt Value amongſt us; but are rather of chief Eſteem, being here, among other Graces, particularly commanded Titus to teach Chriſtians, who have believed in God, carefully to maintain, as being good and profitable unto Men.

In enlarging on this Subject, I ſhall ſhow,

First, The Nature of it, and its Neceſſity.

II. What Obligations we are all under to perform it. — And then,

Conclude with the great Motives we have to engage in the Practice of it. — And,

First, Of the Nature of Gentleneſs, of which there is the greater Occaſion to diſcourſe, becauſe it is too ſeldom

ſeldom viewed in a religious Light; and is more readily conſidered by the Bulk of Men, as a mere Felicity of Nature, or an EXTERIOR Accompliſhment of Manners, than as a Chriſtian Virtue which they are bound to cultivate.

I ſhall begin, therefore, with diſtinguiſhing true Gentleneſs from paſſive Tameneſs of Spirit, and from unlimited Compliance with the Manners of others.

That Paſſive Tameneſs, which ſubmits, without Struggle, to every Encroachment of the Violent and Aſſuming, forms no Part of Chriſtian Duty; but, on the contrary, is deſtructive of general Happineſs and Order. That unlimited Complaiſance, which, on every Occaſion, falls in with the Opinions and Manners of others, is ſo far from being a Virtue, that it is itſelf a Vice, and the Parent of many Vices. It overthrows all Steadineſs of Principle; & produces that ſinful Conformity with the World which taints the whole Character. In the preſent corrupted

that they ſometimes carry its Appearance. Virtue is the univerſal Centre. Even its Shadow is courted, when the Subſtance is wanting. The Imitation of its Form has been reduced into an Art; and, in the Commerce of Life, the firſt Study of all who would either gain the Eſteem, or win the Hearts of others, is, to learn the Speech, and to adopt the Maſkers of Candour, Gentleneſs, and Humanity. But, that Gentleneſs which is the Characteriſtick of a good Man, has, like every other Virtue, its ſeat in the Heart; and, nothing but what flows from thence,

of our own Dignity, and that of others, and of the Reverence due to Mankind, especially to those who hold the higher Links of the social Chain; in a discreet and manly Accommodation of ourselves to the Foibles and Humours of others; in a strict Observance of the Rules of Decorum and Civility; but above all, in a frank obliging Carriage and generous Interchange of good Deeds, rather than Words. It signifies the being civil and obliging in our Carriage and Behaviour towards Others; and imports, all Gentleſs of Manners, and Sweetneſs and Affability of Converſation.

It is That tender and gentle Diſpoſition of the Mind, whereby a Man is diſpoſed to order his Diſcourſe and Behaviour ſo, as not only to be innocent and inoffenſive, but agreeable and acceptable to all. (*) It

thence can render even external Manners truly pleaſing. For no aſſumed Behaviour can at all Times hide the real Character. In that unaffected Civility which ſprings from a gentle Mind, there is a Charm infinitely more powerful than in all the ſtudied Manners of the moſt finiſhed Courtier.

(*) Courteous Behaviour is due to all Men. The good Man is kind and obliging in the very Force within him, and this gives an agreeable Conſiſtency to his whole Demeanour. His very Features are diſpoſed with the Rays of Goodneſs, which ſhoot from his Heart: and the cloudeſt Aſpect he puts on, cannot conceal the Serenity and Heaven within his Breaſt. He does Violence to his Nature, if he does an ungracious thing. In refuſing a Favour aſked, he will oblige the

corrupted State of human Manners, always to assent and to comply, is the very worst Maxim we can adopt. It is impossible to support the Purity and Dignity of Christian Morals, without opposing the World on various Occasions, even though we should stand alone. That Gentleness, therefore, which belongs to Virtue, is to be carefully distinguished from the mean Spirit of Cowards, and the fawning Assent of Sycophants. It renounces no just Right from Fear. It gives up no important Truth from Flattery. It is indeed not only consistent with a firm Mind, but it necessarily requires a manly Spirit, and a fixed Principle, in Order to give it any real Value. Upon this solid Ground only, the Polish of Gentleness can with Advantage be superinduced.

It stands opposed, not to the most determined Regard for Virtue and Truth, but to Harshness and Severity, to Pride and Arrogance, to Violence and Oppression. – Nor doth it consist, (in Opposition to this,) in a studied smooth Address, an artificial & obsequious Air, fawning Adulations or a polite Servility of Manners, which are learned in the School of the World. Such Accomplishments, the most Frivolous & Empty may possess; too often they are employed by the Artful as a Snare: too often affected by the Hard and Unfeeling, as a Cover to the Baseness of their Mind. (*) But is founded in a just and modest Sense of

(*) We cannot help observing the Homage, which even in these Instances, the World is constrained to pay to Virtue. In Order to render Society agreeable, it is found necessary to assume somewhat that may at least carry its Appearance. Virtue is the universal Charm. Even its Shadow is courted, when the Substance is wanting. The Imitation of its Form has been reduced into an Art; and, in the Commerce of Life, the first Study of all who would either gain the Esteem, or win the Hearts of others, is, to learn the Speech, and to adopt the Manners of Candour, Gentleness, and Humanity. But, that Gentleness which is the Characteristick of a good Man, has, like every other Virtue, its seat in the Heart; and, nothing but what flows from thence,

of our own Dignity, and that of others, and of the Reverence due to Mankind, especially to those who hold the higher Links of the social Chain; in a discreet and manly Accommodation of ourselves to the Foibles and Humours of others; in a strict Observance of the Rules of Decorum and Civility; but above all, in a frank obliging Carriage and generous Interchange of good Deeds, rather than Words. It signifies the being civil and obliging in our Carriage and Behaviour towards Others; and imports, all Gentleness of Manners, and Sweetness and Affability of Conversation.

2. It is That tender and gentle Disposition of the Mind, whereby a Man is disposed to order his Discourse, and Behaviour, so as not only to be innocent and inoffensive, but agreeable and acceptable to all. (*) It

thence, can render even external Manners truly pleasing. For, no assumed Behaviour can at all Times hide the real Character. In that unaffected Civility which springs from a gentle Mind, there is a Charm infinitely more powerful than in all the studied Manners of the most polished Courtier.

(*) Courteous Behaviour is due to all Men. The good Man is kind and obliging in the very Force within him, and this gives an agreeable Complacency to his whole Demeanour. His very Features are gilded with the Rays of Goodness, which break forth from his Heart: and the cloudest Aspect he puts on, cannot conceal the Serenity and Heaven within his Breast. He does Violence to his Nature, if he does an ungracious thing. In refusing a Favour asked, he will oblige the

It is a Virtue by which we obſerve a Decency in all our Words and Actions; thereby behaving towards Others in all the Relations in which we ſtand to one another; giving to all their due, and that Deference of Place and Reſpect which their Station and Circumſtances reſpectively require from us; (*) and

Man whom he refuſes. His very Denials have a better Grace, and perhaps more real Kindneſs, than other Men's Favours; as his Favours, (from the Manner of doing them,) have a double value.

(*) *Singula quæque Locum teneant ſortita decenter.*

Ut in Bilance alterâ inſurgente, altera tenui ſe deprimat. Ita, Pro-tag. ipſis ad claſſem Fratri obſervandi ſubeuntes ſe, non repugnans.

Det Locum Superiori Inferior. — Cede Majoribus.

See No. 529 of the Spectator.

When God hath ſet any one above us, it is juſt and fit we ſhould yield & give That Place to him which is of God's Appointment. Tho' it may be, a wiſe or virtuous poor Man hath more Right to our Eſteem than a fortunate Knave or Fool; yet, foraſmuch as in *outward* Rank and Condition God hath preferred the latter, he hath the Rights of Precedency, and of outward Reſpect and Obſervance; and ought to be treated with greater Regard and Obedience. This is a Duty ſo important upon all, that our Church hath thought proper to teach it in her firſt Rudiments of Chriſtianity; where Children are taught to Order themſelves lowly and reverently to all their Betters. (*)

Be not ambitious therefore, in taking Place of any Man. If he be thy Superior, it is his due; if thine Inferior, it is his Diſhonour; it is Thou muſt honour thy Place, not thy Place thee. See No. 219 of the Spectator, with Proverbs xxv. 6. and Luke xiv. 7. &c.

Sedere jubeas eum qui tibi ſedile præbet, ſi erit tibi Gloriæ.

We ſhould, above all, in a frank obliging Carriage and generous Intercourſe of good Deeds, rather than Words, and Sweetneſs and Affability of Converſe, ſtudy to oblige our Friends and Neighbours, and to make them eaſy and pleaſed with themſelves and us. Which is a Duty of great Extent, and comprehends in it many Particulars, and Qualifications

and may be defined an Habit of pleasing, and of being PLEASED, a constant & perennial Softness of Manners, Easiness of Approach (a) and Suavity of Disposition toward all Men. It is properly, that Part of the great Virtue of Charity, which makes us unwilling to give Pain to any of our Brethren. Compassion prompts us to relieve their Wants; Forbearance prevents us from retaliating their Injuries; Meekness restrains our angry Passions, and Candour whole Behaviour. It is native feeling,

[illegible] which are of common Right to us and them, the 1st Dishes, &c; but on the contrary always decline them ourselves, and offer them to others; who in their Turns, will offer them to us; so that upon the Whole, we shall, in our Turn, enjoy our Share of the common Right. — To Superiors give Respect, Deference, and Submission; to Equals, Affection and Confidence; to all Our Assistance, and all the Service in our Power. — Be civil to All, serviceable to Many, familiar with Few, a Friend to One, and an Enemy to None.

(a) A Man of great Character should always render himself accessible; nothing but a mean Genius ought to be shy of showing himself, as being conscious that his Merit will not bear too near a Scrutiny. There is a Medium between a Haughtiness that despises others, and a Familiarity that makes us cheap, and of low Account. If a Man accosts us, or talks to us ever so dully or frivolously, it is worse than Rudeness, it is Brutality, to shew him, by a manifest Inattention to what he says, that we think him a Fool, or a Blockhead, and not worth hearing. It is much more so with Regard to the other Sex; who, of whatever Rank they are, are entitled to Gentleness of their Sex, not only to an attentive, but an officious good Breeding from Men. Their little Wants, Likings, Dislikes, Preferences, Antipathies, and Fancies, must be officiously attended to, and, if possible, guessed at and anticipated, by a well-bred Man.

Candour our ſevere Judgments; but Gentleneſs corrects whatever is offenſive in our Manners; & by a conſtant Train of humane Attentions, ſtudies to alleviate the Burden of common Miſery. Its Office, therefore, is extenſive. — It is not like ſome other Virtues, called forth only on peculiar Emergencies; but it is continually in Action when we are engaged in Intercourſe with Men. It ought to form our Addreſs, to regulate our Speech, and to diffuſe itſelf over our whole Behaviour. It is native feeling, heightened and improved by Principle. — It is the Heart which eaſily relents, which feels for every thing that is human; and is backward and ſlow to inflict the leaſt Wound. It is affable in its Addreſs, mild in its Demeanour; ever ready to oblidge, and willing to be oblidged by others; breathing habitual Kindneſs towards Friends, Courteſy to Strangers, and Long-ſuffering to Enemies. It exerciſes Authority with Moderation; adminiſters Reproof with Tenderneſs, confers Favours with Eaſe and Modeſty. It is unaſſuming in Opinion, and temperate in Zeal. (*) It contends not eagerly about Trifles; is ſlow to contradict, and yet ſlower to blame; but prompt to allay Diſſention, and to reſtore Peace. It neither inter-

(*) There is this Difference between a *meek* and a *gentle* Man, the One has no Gall, the Other bridles it; and in this is Virtue.

intermeddles unnecessarily with the Affairs, nor pries inquisitively into the Secrets of others. It delights above all things to alleviate Distress, and if it cannot dry the falling Tear, to sooth at least the grieving Heart. Where it has not the Power of being useful, it is never burthensome. It seeks to please, rather than shine, and decides and conceals with Care that Superiority, either of Talents, or of Rank, which is oppressive to those who are beneath it. In a Word,

It is that Spirit, and that Tenour of Manners which the Gospel of Christ enjoins when it commands us "to bear one Another's Burdens;" - to "rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep;" - to "please every one his Neighbour for his Good;" - to be "kind & tender hearted;" - to "be pitiful & courteous;" - to "support the weak, and to be patient towards all Men."

As to the Expediency of this Virtue, It is so necessary for the living with any Comfort in Society, (*) that it ever was in Esteem, even with Heathens and

(*) If it were considered how much the Pride of Society is provoked by the Forms of what we call good Breeding, they would not hastily be neglected, nor left as useless or Superfluous. Every one is pleased to be treated with the Appearance of Respect, and no prudent Man would, therefore, refuse to pay [illegible] Trifles can be communicated

and Idolaters; and, whatever Absurdities they ran into, in Point of religious Ceremonies and Rites of Worship, they always looked upon Love, Gentleness, and Affability, as necessary to sweeten Life, and make agreeable all our Conversation. And,

In Proportion to their Knowledge and Skill in Learning and Arts, were noted for Humanity and Complaisance, so as from thence to be distinguished, from less cultivated People, by the Style of CIVILIZED Nations; (*) and agreeably hereto, all Persons

cated at so cheap a Rate, no good-natured Person would neglect the Means. Whatever contributes to the good Understanding, and mutual Respect of social Life, ought not by any Means to be rejected. There is enough of Malignity in human Nature to disorder the Peace and Commerce of Mankind, without creating Coldness by a studied Negligence of Civility, or a rude, or careless, or perhaps affected Contempt of the established and expected Forms of Politeness. We should endeavour, as much as possible to cherish the Principle of social Benevolence, and, (as St. Paul says,) be in some Measure "all things to all Men." Whatever may advance the Happiness or Satisfaction of our Neighbour, Christian Charity obliges us to offer; whatever would discompose or disgust him, we ought, in Justice, to avoid, as we might easily conclude it would be unwelcome to ourselves.

(*) There are those that perform all the Arts of Life and Good-breeding with so much Ease, that the Virtue of their Conduct looks more like Instinct than Choice: they adapt themselves to all Sorts of Characters, with so dexterous a Compliance, that their Humours seem to be that of all others; they appear generous with Men of Honour, subtle with the intriguing, witness Paris to the stupid and

of good Extraction, and polite Education, in all Countries, whether they profess to be guided by the Dictates of Religion or no, are particularly desirous of being esteemed Masters of this Virtue, as an Accomplishment altogether necessary in Persons of their Condition; and indeed as a Qualification, in some Sort, peculiar to them. (*) But Although

and commit voluntary Fopperies, to agree with real Fops.

The wise Man adapts himself to the several Humours and Inclinations of those with whom he converses.

Omnia Aristippum decuit Color, et Status, et Res.

There is something particular that pleases in a Gentleman's Conversation, when he is well-bred, and which can never be learned but in the Company of the Polite. No one can define it, yet every one is sensible when they meet it, or when they miss it. The Virtues of Men are as taking as their Vices, and our good Qualities affect us more than our ill. A Man should not dissemble and flatter in Company; but a Man may be very agreeable, strictly consistent with Truth and Sincerity, by a prudent Silence, where he cannot concur, and a pleasing Assent where he can. Now and then you meet with a Person so exactly formed to please, that he will gain upon every One that hears or beholds him; this Disposition is not merely the Gift of Nature, but frequently the Effect of much Knowledge of the World, and a Command over the Passions.

(*) When we think of the Heart of a GENTLEMAN, we imagine it firm and intrepid, void of all inordinate Passions, and full of Tenderness, Compassion and Benevolence. When we think of the *fine Gentleman*, with Regard to his *Manners*, We conceive him modest, without Bashfulness; frank and affable, without Impertinence; obliging and complaisant, without Servility; cheerful and good humoured,

Although this is a Proof of the Value and Excellency of this Virtue, (for which Reaſon it is mentioned,) yet we ſhall be led into Error, if we think that it is a Duty peculiar to Men of Birth only, and who are of liberal Education.

Though the Want of it is more diſgraceful and faulty in ſuch, than in others; yet, it is alike the Duty of ALL; (*) and is doubtleſs, in frequent Inſtances,

moured, without Noiſe: theſe amiable Qualities are not eaſily obtained; neither are there many that have a Genius to this Way. A *finiſhed* Gentleman is, perhaps, the moſt uncommon of all the great Characters in Life: for, beſides the natural Endowments, with which this great Man is to be born, he muſt run thro' a long Series of Education, before he makes his Appearance, or ſhines in the World. He muſt be principled in Religion, inſtructed in all the morale Virtues; And led thro' the whole Courſe of the Polite Arts and Sciences. He ſhould be no Stranger to either Court or Camp; he muſt travel, to open his Mind, and enlarge his Views, to learn the Policies and Intereſts of foreign States, as well as to faſhion and poliſh himſelf, & to get clear of thoſe natural Prejudices, of which every Country has its Share.

Peregrinatio Animi rectior ad Judicium.

To theſe more eſſential Improvements, he muſt not forget to add the faſhionable Ornaments, ſuch as are the Languages, and Exerciſes moſt in Vogue; ſuch even Praiſe itſelf is not beneath his Notice.

(*) *Nullum eſt intelligere ptcunque, et ubicunque ætas ſit obſtare. Comitas et Morum Suavitas debent in omnibus Vitæ Actionibus perpetuo adeſſe. Ede comis et facilis in perſcrutandis alienis Moribus; ad inveniendam Vitia convivens; Ne ſis promptus, tuaque Sententia nimium tenax; ſed* aliorum

stances, practised in a greater Degree by those from whom

aliorum Studiis tenet accommoda. — Urbanity and Civility is a Debt we owe to Mankind. — *Qui Moribus sunt ingeniis eorum sibi conciliant Benevolentiam; qui vero inurbani et agrestes magnâ Vituperationis et Contemptu onerantur.*

Nothing more engages the Affections of Men than a handsome Address and graceful Conversation; It renders a Superior amiable, an Equal agreeable, and an Inferior acceptable.

Arrogance, as well as Singularity in Manners, is ridiculous. A contemptuous Disregard of Inferiors is as prejudicial to our Pursuits as a servile Attention to the Follies & Vices of the Great is degrading to our Dignity. Mankind, alike sensible of Injuries, pardon them much sooner than they forgive Contempt. To be despised, affects our favourite Passions, which long retain the Affront. A generous Heart can never stoop to the Meanness of a Parasite; and, it is the sordid & illiberal alone who bend themselves to unworthy Actions, and assist in gratifying the Caprices and loose Desires of those who are in a higher Rank and Station. Particularity either in Dress or Conversation is disagreeable; for we owe to the World Decency & Propriety, as well as to Ourselves. It is not only unbecoming to Ourselves, but disgusting to those around us. We should always conform ourselves to our Situations, and, being sensible that we behave properly, disregard all the Reproaches and contumelious Language which the ignorant and envious may load us with; especially, too, if the truly Judicious are satisfied with our Conduct. We should strive at the same Time to please; and polished Language, a persuasive Tongue, and real Good Nature, are almost infallible, and seldom miss of Success, when accompanied with Discretion.

Blandiloquii olim capta est Sermonibus Eva.
Et quis non voluit blandis accedere Dictis?

Neglect not Manners, then, as tho they were little things; for they are frequently what the World judges us by, and for which it de-

who it is leſs expected, than by ſuch, who, from their

ſides *for*, or *againſt* us. A little Care to appear obliging and polite before Men, will prevent their making a bad Judgment of us. The leaſt thing is enough to make Men believe we are proud, uncivil, diſdainful and diſobliging. On the other Hand, as little is required to make us eſteemed the contrary. — To make *ourſelves* heard with Pleaſure, we muſt ſay ſuch things as others will be glad to hear, and ſay them *pleaſantly*; which is the beſt Way to make us to be beloved: for Politeneſs ſeems to be a certain Care, by the Manner of our Words and Actions, to make others pleaſed with us and themſelves. It gives a Man the Appearance of ſuppoſed Virtues; and makes him ſeem that *without*, which he ought to be *within*. — In ſhort, it puts Merit forward, and renders it agreeable; and a Man muſt have eminent Qualifications to ſupport himſelf without it; Wiſdom, Valour, and Learning, cannot keep a Man in Countenance, that is poſſeſſed with theſe Exſcellencies, if he wants that leſs Art of Life and Behaviour, called *Good Breeding*. — It is not an opulent Fortune, which has of itſelf a Power to render us agreeable; for Rich Men often put on too haughty and aſſuming an Air. It is not Wit; for that, many Times, proves ſatyrical and offenſive: Neither is it Quality, which may degenerate, and want thoſe Qualifications which are proper to ſupport & adorn it. Nor, laſtly, is it Piety; for, beſides that *good* Men are not always Perſons of the moſt Addreſs, it is impoſſible for them, on every Occaſion, to obſerve the ſtrict Rules of Piety, without appearing ſingular and affected. A Man endowed with great Perfections without This *agreeable* Quality, is like one rich in ſolid Gold, but always wants Change for *ordinary* Occaſions. A Man may have Virtue, Capacity and good Conduct, and yet be, by Reaſon of Roughneſs, inſupportable.

Good Humour hath never-failing Graces,

Ingenio faveo: Ingenioſo mea.

Sic Vita erat, facile omnes perferre, ut pati
Cum quibus erat cunque natâ, ita ſeſe dedere,

Terum

their Station, are much more blameable for neglecting it.

Omne Genus Studii, diversa Remisit,
Nunquam se vertens, aliis, Ille solitus,
Sine Invidiâ invenies Laudem, et Amicos parat.

Nothing more engages the Affections of Men, than an handsome Address and graceful Conversation. — *Ut aperta, amabilia sit.*

See No. 169. of the Spectator.

Quanto Superiores sumus, tanto submittiores submissosque geramus.

Those who address you with Attention hear,
Not study how to make your Wit appear.
Talk That to Each, which Each best understands,
Your Tongue pronouncing what your Heart commands.
Let Speeches ever gently from you fall,
And, in your Looks, at least, be kind to all.
Let your whole Air be disengag'd and free,
Yet don't invite Familiarity.

"Let it not grieve thee to bow down thine Ear to the Poor, and give him a friendly Answer with Meekness." - *Ne Magnus tenuem despicito.*

The Knowledge of Courtesy and Good-Breeding is a very necessary Study; but yet we must still take Care not to be too troublesome or rude, by being over-civil. See No. 119. of the Spectator.

To endeavour not to please, is Ill-Nature; altogether to neglect it, is Folly; and to overstrain it, Vanity and Design. He that is truly polite, knows how to contradict with Respect, and to please without Adulation; and is equally remote from an insipid Praise, and a low Familiarity. — *Ne Modus in Rebus, sunt certi denique Fines,*

Quos ultrà, citràque nequit consistere rectum.

Ne quis nimis. Ne si nimium Moribus facilis, nec nimium difficilis.

Ut Mundus, neque cole tenebrosa, aut Confusa; ita, Homo sine Moribus, vix at agrestis. — See No. 386 of the Spectator.

A good-natured Rustick may be intentionally as civil as the politest Courtier, but his Manner often degrades and vilifies the Matter; whereas,

It is, indeed, a Duty which reſults from every Relation that can be ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt between one another in Life, and without which, not even the Greateſt, or the Meaneſt, can live happy.

It is a Quality that recommends thoſe who are deſtitute of all other Excellencies, and procures Regard to the Trifling, - Friendſhip to the Worthleſs, - and Affection to All (*) — And ſurely,

Nothing can be more unreaſonable than to loſe the Will to pleaſe, when we are conſcious of the Power

whereas, in good Breeding, the *Manner* always adorns and dignifies the Matter to ſuch a degree, that it often gives Currency to baſe Coin.

The Affability of ſome great Men, is ſuch as even to make us believe their Goodneſs greater than their Fortune. A Man without Complaiſance, ought to have a great Deal of Merit in the Room of it; for, moſt Men like People better with agreeable Faults, than offenſive Virtues. — A Man, whoſe great Qualities want the Ornament of ſuperficial Attractions, is like a naked Mountain with Mines of Gold, which will be frequented only till the Treaſure is exhauſted; for Admiration ceaſes with Novelty; and Intereſt, having gained its End, retires. — There is, therefore, a certain Dignity of Manners, abſolutely neceſſary to make even the moſt valuable Character either reſpected or reſpectable.

Horſe-Play, Romping, frequent and loud Fits of Laughter, Jokes, Waggery, and indiſcriminate Familiarity, will ſink both Merit and Knowledge into a Degree of Contempt; A Man, with theſe only, will never be reſpected, let his Merits be what they will.

(*) *Ut alterum Odium Amorem, ita, Concordia creſcit Amor.*
Amor nectis Mentes. — Retia Sodalis blandus ſtruit.

Power, or shew more Cruelty, than those who use any Kind of Influence before they have Kindness.

He that regards the Welfare of Others, should make his Virtue approachable than imitable; be loved and copied; and he that considers the Wants which every Man feels of external Assistance, must rather wish to be surrounded by those that love him; than by those only who admire his Excellencies, or solicit his Favours. For Admiration ceases with Novelty, and Interest having gained its End, retires.

It will, indeed, be readily admitted, that some by the original Frame of their Mind, are more favourably inclined than others towards certain good Dispositions and Habits. But This affords no Justification to those who neglect to oppose the Corruptions to which they are prone. (*) Let

(*) A skilful Astrologer, a Stranger to *Socrates*, upon calculating his Nativity, delineated him an *ill-tempered* Man; for which, his Ability was sufficiently questioned: but the good Philosopher justified the Artist, saying, "Such as He describes me to be, so I was born: but, since that Time I have been corrected, and my whole Nativity hath altered my Temper." So *Diogenes*, a Philosopher of *Megara*, naturally given to Wine; yet was never known to be transported by either Liquor or Lust. Many Evil Habits of Temper may be natural and constitutional in some; and such will be the most blameable if they suffer any thing to spoil them of so valuable a Gift from their Creator: Others will be no less blameable, who, being made of more refined and fiery Spirits, do not apply their Reason for smoothing and governing them; but think it enough if they are natural, if they are not forced or counterfeit. In correcting

Let no Man imagine that the human Heart is a Soil altogether unsusceptable of Culture; or that the worst Temper may not, thro' the Assistance of Grace, be reformed by Attention & Discipline. Settled Depravity of Temper is always owing to our own Indulgence. If, instead of checking, we nourish that Malignity of Disposition to which we are inclined, all the Consequences will be placed to our Account, and every Excuse from natural Constitution be rejected at the Tribunal of Heaven. Regeneration, or Change of Nature, is the essential Characteristick of a Christian. Grace cannot dwell amidst Malevolence and Rancour, nor Heaven be enjoyed by such as are Strangers to Charity and Love. — Which brings me,

II. To show what Obligations we are all under to perform it. — And here,

The Nature of God, — the Relation we stand in to our natural Dispositions, every Man hath his Work, tho different from the Work of another, and he who is naturally mild, may have Faults in him to correct, which the Man who is naturally rough, may have no Concern with. This may be said, that whatever be the natural and different Tempers of Men, the Mild Man should study to preserve What Nature has given him, & the Rough Man should study to acquire That, with which the Nature hath not given, yet Reason and Religion may supply him. — See Knox's Essays No. 91. Religious and moral Principles not only consistent with, but promotive of, true Politeness and the Art of pleasing.

to the Publick, and our own Interest, do most strongly enforce it upon us.

When we consider God, nothing is so conspicuous as his Greatness and Majesty; & yet, in his Word, nothing is more remarkable than his Attention to soften that Greatness, and to place it in the mildest and most gentle Light. He not only characterises himself as the "God of Consolation;" but, with condescending Gentleness, He particularly accommodates himself to the Situation of the Unfortunate. "He dwelleth with the humble and contrite." "He hideth not his Face when the Afflicted cry." "He healeth the broken in Heart, and bindeth up their Wounds."

In God, the Son, we find the same Attributes of mild & gentle Goodness, both predicted of him & fulfilled in him. — Long before his Birth, it was prophesied of Him, that He should not strive, nor cry, nor cause his Voice to be heard in the Streets; - that a bruised Reed He should not break, nor quench the smoaking Flax. Accordingly,

During all his Intercourse with Men, no Harshness, or Pride, or stately Distance appeared in his Demeanour. In his Accesss He was easy; - in his Manners, free; - in his Answers, mild; and in his whole Behaviour, humble & obliging: insomuch

that he particularly enjoins us to follow him in it. "Learn of Me, (ſays he,) for I am meek and lowly in Heart." — Accordingly, after his Death, this diſtinguiſhing Feature in his Character was ſo univerſally remembered, that the Apoſtle St. Paul, on Occaſion of a Requeſt which he makes to the Corinthians, uſes thoſe remarkable Expreſſions, "I beſeech you by the Mercies & Gentleneſs of Chriſt."

As the Son of God is the Pattern, ſo the Holy Ghoſt is the Inſpirer of Gentleneſs. His Name is, "the Comforter," "the Spirit of Grace and Peace." His Fruits, or Operations on the human Mind, are, "Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Meekneſs;" &c. —And, According to the Nature of God, ſo it is the only Virtue that will have an everlaſting Continuance. When every thing elſe ſhall fail, & Time itſelf go out into Eternity, Love and Praiſe will endure for ever, and we with each other in Heaven, to endleſs Ages.

Thus by every Diſcovery of the Godhead, &c. Honour is conferred upon Love and Gentleneſs; and ſuitable to ſuch Diſcoveries, is the whole Strain of the Goſpel; as if the Deſign of the Revelation we have from God was to promote and eſtabliſh the great Duty of Brotherly-love and Gentleneſs,

Serm. CXIII. "Peace

"Peace on Earth, and Good-will among Men."

Let us then, such powerful and winning Examples together with the many authentic Precepts for it, be without their proper Influence upon us.

Indeed, so predominant, is this Spirit throughout the Christian Dispensation, that even the Vices and Corruptions of Men have not been able altogether to defeat its Tendency. Though that Dispensation is far from having hitherto produced its full Effect upon the World, yet we can clearly trace its Influence, in humanizing the Manners of Men. Remarkable, in this Respect, is the Victory which it has gained over those Powers of Violence and Cruelty, which belong to the infernal Region. Wherever Christianity prevails, it has discouraged, and, in some Degree, abolished Slavery. It has rescued human Nature from that ignominious Yoke, under which, in former Ages, the one half of Mankind groaned.

mutual Love and Friendship. — And,

As all Men are obliged to this by the necessary Law of Nature, so they are also strongly prompted to it by the natural Inclinations of their own Minds, when uncorrupt, and not biassed by Prejudice or Passion.

Gentleness, therefore, is what Man, as such, in every Station, is indebted to Man. - Accordingly,

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"Peace

groaned. It has abated the Ferociousness of War. It has mitigated the Rigour of Despotism, mitigated the Cruelty of Punishment; in a Word, has reduced Mankind from their ancient Barbarity, into a more humane and gentle State. — Do we pretend Respect and Zeal for this Religion, and at the same Time allow ourselves in that Harshness and Severity, which are so contradictory to its Genius? Too plainly we shew, that it has no Power over our Hearts. We may retain the Christian Name; but we have abandoned the Christian Spirit.

But further, — As the Example and Law of God oblige us, &c. (under) —

oblige us to the Practice of this Duty, so does also the Relation we bear to one another.

If we consider ourselves as Christians and the Children of God by Adoption and Grace, united by one Spirit, under one common Lord and Master, Partakers of the same Redemption, and Heirs of the same Salvation, Brotherly-Love and Kindness cannot be separated from such an intimate Relation and Conjunction. — Besides, it is evident, by the original Order and Constitution of Nature, that Men are so framed and made, that they necessarily want each other's Help and Assistance, for their mutual Support and Preservation. — Society is absolutely necessary for them, and the Bond of all Society is mutual Love and Friendship. — And,

As all Men are obliged to this by the necessary Law of Nature, so they are also strongly prompted to it by the natural Inclinations of their own Minds, when uncorrupt, and not biassed by Prejudice or Passion.

Gentleness, therefore, is what Man, as such, in every Station, is indebted to Man. - Accordingly,

as All feel the Claim when they have to it; so all are sensibly hurt by the Want of it in Others. No Complaint is more feelingly made, than that of harsh Treatment from others. — But

How seldom do we transfer the Cause to Ourselves, or examine how far we are guilty of inflicting on Others, (whose Sensibility is the same with ours,) those very Wounds of which we so loudly complain? — Perhaps,

It will be pleaded by some, that this Gentleness, on which we now insist, regards only those SMALLER Offices of Life, which, in their Eye, are not essential to Religion and Goodness.

Negligent, they confess, on SLIGHT Occasions, of the Government of their Temper, or the Regulation of their Behaviour, they are attentive, as they pretend, to the GREAT Duties of Beneficence; and ready, whenever Opportunity offers, to perform IMPORTANT Services to their Fellow-Creatures.

But, Let such Persons reflect, that the Occasions of performing these important good Deeds, very rarely occur. Perhaps, their Situation in Life, or the Nature of their Connections, may, in a great Measure, exclude them from such Opportunities.

Great Events give Scope for great Virtues: But, the main Tenour of human Life is composed of

Occurrences. Within the Round of these, lie the Materials of the Happiness of most Men; the Subjects of their Duty, and the Trials of their Virtue. Virtue must be formed and supported, not by unfrequent Acts, but by daily and repeated Exertions.

In Order to its becoming either vigorous or useful, it must be habitually active; not breaking forth occasionally with a transient Lustre, but regular in its Progress.

Years may pass over our Heads, without affording any Opportunity for Acts of high Beneficence, or extensive Utility. Whereas, no Time passes, but in the common Transactions of Life, and especially in the Intercourse of domestic Society, no Heedlessness finds a Place for promoting the Happiness of others, and for strengthening in ourselves the Habit of Virtue. (*)

Indeed, — By the seasonable Discoveries of an humane Spirit, we sometimes contribute more materially to the Advancement of Happiness, than by Actions which are seemingly more important. (†)

There are Situations, not in fam'd human Life, where the encouriging Reception — the condescending

(*) See Vol. iv. Page 211. (†) Spectator.

ing Behaviour, & Tear of Sympathy, bring greater Relief to the Heart, than the moſt bountiful Gift. While, on the other Side, when the Hand of Liberality is extended to beſtow, the Want of Gentleneſs is ſufficient to fruſtrate the Intention of the Benefit. We grieve thoſe whom we mean to oblige; and, by conferring Favours with Oſtentation and Harſhneſs, we convert them into Injuries. (*)

Can any Diſpoſition, then, be held low in the Scale of Virtue, whoſe Influence is ſo conſiderable to the Happineſs of the World? — But,

If what hath been already ſaid, be inſufficient to recommend this Virtue, let us conſider,

3dly. How deeply our own Intereſt is concerned in it.

Every Virtue is profitable, as it is a Behaviour ſuitable to Right Reaſon, and an Act of Obedience to the Commands of God; and, by theſe Means, conduces to our Salvation. — But,

Beſides theſe, the Virtue before us hath ſome peculiar Advantages to recommend itſelf to us.

St. John aſſures us, that "there is no Torment in Love."

(*) A Gift, beſtowed *harſhly*, hath been fitly called "a *ſtony* Piece of Bread." However neceſſary it may be to the Receiver, it almoſt chooks in going down.

Love, it is full of Complacency and Good-Humour; and there is an Satisfaction equal to the Consciousness of deserving well of all: He who looks upon all Mankind as his Family and Relations, and seeks to promote their Welfare, can have no Subject of Fear and Discontent: he hath the whole World to be happy out of, every Man is moral, a Friend, and every Object gladdens his Sight.

Whatever Ends a good Man can be supposed to pursue, Love and Gentleness will be found to favour them: It prepossesses and wins every Heart, it persuades, when every other Argument fails. Softness disarms the Fierce and melts the Stubborn.

As Strife is the Disquiet of Kingdoms, and the Supplanter of Peace: so Love is Gentleness, Courtesy and Good-Nature, are the Means and Promoters of every thing that is conducive either to the Ornament or Happiness of Life. (*) It is the Nurse of Peace and Friendship, and mightily contributes to the Pleasure, as well as Usefulness of Society, being the great Avenue to mutual Enjoyment.

Amidst

(*) Love is the Epitome of our whole Duty, and all the Sweetness and Endearments of Society that can be, so long as they are lawful and honest, are not only consistent with it, but Parts and Expressions of it.

Amidſt the Strife of interfering Intereſts, it tempers the Violence of Contention, and keeps alive the Seeds of Harmony: It ſoftens Animoſities, cements Endearments, and renders the Countenance of Man a Refreſhment to Man. — Indeed

The Importance of a ſocial Spirit to the Happineſs of Society, — of obliging Condeſcenſion in Superiors, — of Reſpectfulneſs and Deference in Inferiors, — of Deſire to pleaſe, and Willingneſs to be pleaſed, amongſt Equals, are Points too evident to need here any Proof; and (in Reaſon) cannot be overlooked. Inſomuch, that were Gentleneſs to be baniſhed from the Earth, and the World filled with none but the Harſh and Contentious, the Solitude of the Deſert would THEN be preferable to it.

But, Whatever may be the Effects of this Virtue on our EXTERNAL Connexions, its Influence on our INTERNAL Enjoyment is certain and powerful. When Benignity and Gentleneſs reign within, we are then capable of feeling every Pleaſure; & every Perſon, & every Occurrence, are beheld in the moſt favourable Light. (*) Thus

(*) A good Temper is one of principal Ingredients of Happineſs. This, it may be ſaid, is the Work of Nature; and ſo, in great Meaſure, it is; yet ſometimes it may be acquired by Art, and always improved by Culture. Attend to every Object that attracts our Notice, and

its

its bright and its dark Side. He that habituates himself to look on the *displeasing* Side, will sour his Disposition, and consequently impair his Happiness: while he who constantly beholds it on the *bright* Side, insensibly meliorates his Temper, and increases the Sum of his own Happiness, and the Happiness of all about him.

The Man of this Temper, by constantly accustoming himself to look only on the *bright* Side of Objects, preserves a perpetual Cheerfulness in himself, which, by a Kind of happy Contagion, he communicates to all about him. If any Misfortune has befallen him, he considers it might have been worse, and is, of Course, thankful to Providence for his present State. He rejoices in Solitude, as it gives him an Opportunity of knowing himself, and in Society, studies to cultivate Friendship. He chuses for his Companions every Man of Virtue to his Failings, and can find out something to cherish and applaud in the very worst of his Acquaintance. In every Place, he observes numberless Beauties, unobserved before: and enjoys every Change, as bringing with it something of Health and Convenience.

In Conversation he never starts a Subject that leads to any thing gloomy or disagreeable; and therefore never repeats his own Grievances, or those of his Neighbours, or, (what is worst of all,) their Faults or Imperfections. If any thing of the latter Kind be mentioned, he has the Address to turn it into Entertainment, by changing the most odious Railing into a pleasant and an agreeable Raillery. — Thus, like the Bee, he gathers Honey from every Weed, and consequently is always easy and cheerful, as he finds a continual Banquet before him.

In Conversation, as well as Life, Happiness very often depends upon the slightest Incidents; it therefore should be our Business, and the Delight of our Conversation, how to communicate Happiness to all about us; the Minutiæ of Conversation ought carefully to be attended to: the Brightness of the Sky, the Length of the Days, the increasing

This Virtue has another still more important Connection with our Interest by Means of that Relation which our present Behaviour bears to our eternal State.

Heaven is the Region of Gentleness, as Hell is of Fierceness and Animosity. "All things that offend will be gathered out of that Holy Mountain."

It may, perhaps, be objected, and said, that with Regard to Trifles, Men may be allowed the Indulgence of their malignant Dispositions. But,

Let them remember well, that those Trifles, by increasing the Growth of Peevishness and Passion, become pregnant with the most serious Mischiefs, and may fit them, before they are aware, for being the future Companions of none but infernal Spirits.

In Fact, — It is our Behaviour in our daily Train of social Intercourse, which, (as already observed,) more than any other Cause, fixes and determines our spiritual Character, gradually infilling those cheering Verdure of the Spring, or whatever carries with it the most distant Glimpse of JOY, shall frequently be the Parent of a social and happy Connexion.

Good Manners and good Sense require this from us; and by thus acting, we cherish and improve both the one and the other, and arrive at that easy Benevolence of Temper, which the World calls GOOD-NATURE, and the Scripture, CHARITY; whose natural and never-failing Fruit is Happiness.

their Diſpoſitions, and forming thoſe Habits which affect our everlaſting Condition.

Let us then reſpect our Characters, as Men, and as Chriſtians, and the twofold Advantage of the Virtue before us, reſpecting the Intereſts both of this and a future Life. Let us reflect on the ſmall Moment of thoſe things which are the uſual Incentives to Violence and Contention, and in our Thoughts, contemplate and lay hold of the more enduring Subſtance which is ſet before us. — Let the Proſpects of Immortality fill our Minds; and let us conſider ourſelves as engaged in the Purſuit of higher Intereſts, as acting now, under the Eye of God, an introductory Part to a more important Scene.

Elevated by ſuch Sentiments, our Minds will become calm and ſedate; we ſhall look down, as from a ſuperior Station, on the petty Diſturbances of the World, and ſhall treat with the Mildneſs of a more exalted Nature, what, in little Minds, would call forth all the Bitterneſs of Rancour and Paſſion.

Aided by ſuch Conſiderations, let us cultivate this Virtue which is, in ſo many Reſpects, important both to our Duty and our Happineſs. Let us aſſume it as the Ornament of every Age, and of every Station. Let it temper the Petulance of Youth, and ſoften the Moroſeneſs of Old-age. Let it mitigate Authority in thoſe who rule, and promote Deference among thoſe who obey.

Thus Gentleneſs is our Safeguard and Security; is our preſent Enjoyment, &c. (under)

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Good Manners and good Sense require this from us; and by thus acting, we cherish and improve both the one and the other, and arrive at that easy Benevolence of Temper, which the World calls GOOD-NATURE, and the Scripture, CHARITY, whose natural and never-failing Fruit is Happiness.

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Let us then respect our Character, as Men, and as Christians, and the twofold Advantage of the Virtue before us, respecting the Interests both of the present and future Life. Let us reflect on the small Moment of those things which are the usual Incentives to Violence and Contention; and in our Thoughts, contemplate and lay hold of the more enduring Substance which is set before us. — Let the Prospects of Immortality fill our Minds; and let us consider ourselves as engaged in the Pursuit of higher Interests, as acting now under the Eye of

[illegible]

is our present Enjoyment, and the Earnest of our future Expectance; for, "against this there is no Law." — And,

We may also add, with the Apostle, in another

Place, that "it is the fulfilling of the Law." — Now,

To be no Tranſgreſſors, and ſo be beyond the Reach of the Law, is no ſmall Comfort. — But, To be the Fulfillers of it, muſt be exceeding Conſolation, as we are hereby not only free from the Danger of ſuffering its Penalties; but are alſo entitled to every Privilege and Security of it in preſent Enjoyment, and the full Expectation of all the Bleſſings which it promiſes hereafter.

How many Bleſſings, (only differently expreſſed,) doth our Saviour pronounce upon the Virtue before us!

"Bleſſed, (ſays He,) are the poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven:" — "Bleſſed are the Meek; for they ſhall inherit the Earth:" — "Bleſſed are the Merciful; for they ſhall obtain Mercy:" — "Bleſſed are the Peace-makers; for they ſhall be called the Children of God." Yea, and every one who ſeeth theſe things in us "will riſe up, and call us bleſſed."

As to the natural Tendency of the above Beatitudes, in their temporal Reſpect, daily Experience confirms the Truth of them to us: — And, As to their future Expectations, we may reſt aſſuredly of them, as "God is true."

What,

What, therefore, after all these things, shall put us beyond so exceeding an Advantage, and so great and happy a Composure? — In a Word:

The Duty before us is usually an Indication of Wisdom, and Greatness of Mind; is profitable to human Society, acceptable to God, and pleasing to Men; it is advantageous to our Honour, and Safety; and therefore, upon all these Accounts, and "above all things," may justly challenge our Attention and Study, in Order to Practice.

"As much therefore as lieth in you, if it be possible, live peaceably with all Men;" and, "love as Brethren."

I shall add to this that excellent Eulogium of the Royal Prophet in the Case:

"Behold, How good and joyful a thing it is, Brethren, to dwell together in Unity!

"It is like the precious Ointment upon the Head, that ran down unto the Beard, even unto Aaron's Beard, and went down to the Skirts of his Cloathing." — It is of so high a Value, as to be compared to the most costly things, rich Odours, and precious Ointment; & equally diffuses itself over the WHOLE Man. "It is like the Dew of Hermon, which fell upon the Hill of Sion; for, there the Lord promised his Blessing, and Life for evermore."

"Happy is the Man, then, who hath ſown in his Breaſt the Seeds of Benevolence: the Produce thereof ſhall be Charity and Love.

"From the Fountain of his Heart ſhall riſe Rivers of Goodneſs; and the Streams ſhall overflow for the Benefit of Mankind.

"He calmeth the Fury, he healeth the Quarrels of angry Men, and preventeth the Miſchiefs of Strife and Animoſity.

"He promoteth in his Neighbourhood Peace and Good-will, and his Name is repeated with Praiſe and Benedictions."

Sermon

SERMON CXIV.

Against Evil-speaking.

TITUS iii. 2. "Speak evil of no Man."

"He that uttereth a Slander, is a Fool."

There are several Reasons for which Christians ought to be exhorted to refrain from Evil-speaking.

First, It is not only a mean and shameful, but a pernicious Fault, producing much Harm to Society, and is the Cause why many live hated, and hating one another, & die in the same unfriendly Disposition.

Secondly, It is a common and wide-spread Evil, and very few are entirely free from it. (*)

"Who

(*) We are all angry at Back-biting, yet are all of us more or less subject to it. *Qui vult tædere Canem, facile invenit Fustem.*

— — — — 'Tis Slander,
Whose Edge is sharper than the Sword;
Whose Tongue out-venoms all the Worms of Nile;
Whose Breath rides on the posting Winds,
And doth belie all the Corners of the World.
Kings, Queens, and States, Maids, and Matrons,
Nay, the Secrets of the Grave,
this viperous Slander enters."

"Behold,

"Who is he, (saith the wise Son of Sirach,) that hath not offended with his Tongue?" (*) — and,

"In many things, (saith St. James) we offend all;" and, "if any Man offend not in Word, the same is perfect;" for, "the Tongue is an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poison."

Thirdly, They who are addicted to it, either seldom

— "Behold, we put Bits in the Horses Mouths, that they may obey us; & we turn about their whole Body. Behold also the Ships, which, tho they be so great, and are driven of fierce Winds, yet are they turned about with a very small Helm, whithersoever the Governour listeth. Even so the Tongue is a little Member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth! And the Tongue is a Fire, a World of Iniquity: so is the Tongue among the Members, that it defileth the whole Body, and setteth on Fire the Course of Nature; and is set on Fire of Hell. For every Kind of Beasts, & of Birds, and of Serpents, and things in the Sea, is tamed, & hath been tamed of Mankind. But the Tongue can no Man tame; it is an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poison." — *Quanvis Terra Convitiatorem alit.*

It is harder to avoid Censure, than to gain Applause; for this may be done by one great and wise Action in an Age; but to escape Censure, a Man must pass his whole Life without either Fault or Error. Reputation is gained by many good Actions, & lost by One bad one. "As dead Flies cause the Ointment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking Savour: so doth a little Folly him that is in Reputation for Wisdom and Honour." — *Si bene vis audire, disce bene loqui, et cum bene loqui didiceris, recte facere cures, hoc enim Modo bonam Famam acquires.*

(*) *Lingua dicitur, quia linguit dilapsis; mortes detrahendo, attrahit mentiendo; liget et ligari non potest; labilis est, et teneri non potest, sed labitur et fallit.* — See the preceding Note.

these reflect upon its odious Nature, either are not sensible what and how great they thus offend, or have several plausible, though vain Excuses, to justify themselves, in And,

Lastly, Unless we endeavour to avoid it, and in some good Measure become Masters of ourselves herein, all our other Pretences to Religion are vain. — For, "If any Man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, this Man's Religion is vain."

Upon those Accounts, therefore, it is necessary, that it should be set in a true Light, and have its Share of Rebuke amongst other Vices; from which we are commanded in Scripture to sustain ourselves, and also to dissuade others from it.

As to the Vice itself, it is a Propensity of Mind to think ill of all Man, & afterwards to utter such Sentiments in evil Expressions.

That fond Desire for Slander too common in all Ranks of People, whether to gratify a little angerous Resentment; or whether often out of a Principle of Levelling, from a Narrowness & Poverty of Soul, ever impatient of Merit and Superiority in others; whether a mean Ambition, or the insatiate Lust of being Witty, (a Talent in which Ill-nature and

Malice are no Ingredients;) or lastly, whether from a natural Cruelty of Disposition, abstracted from all private Views, or Self-Considerations. — To which, or whether to all jointly, we are indebted for this contagious Malady, thus much is certain, from whatever Seed it springs, the Growth and Progress of it, are as destructive to, as they are unbecoming, a civilized People.

To pass a hard and ill-natured Reflection upon an undesigning Action; to invent, of which is equally bad, to propagate a vexatious Report, without Colour of Grounds, to plunder an innocent Man of his Character and Good-name, (a Jewel which he prizeth as his Life,) to rob him at the same Time of his Happiness and Peace of Mind, perhaps his Livelihood, and That also of a virtuous Family; All this, (as Solomon says of the Madman, who "casteth about Firebrands, Arrows, and Death, and saith, AM I NOT IN SPORT?") All this out of Wantonness, and oftener from worse Motives. The whole appears such a Complication of Badness, as requires no Words or Warmth of Fancy to aggravate.

How many are the Vehicles in which this deadly Poison is prepared and communicated to the World; and, by some artful Hands, it is done by so subtile

and

and like an Infusion, that it is not to be discovered but by its Effects. (*)

How frequently is the Honesty and Integrity of a Man disposed of by an approved Satire on the Reproach? How many good and generous Actions have been sunk into Oblivion, by a distrustful Look, more eloquent than Words? & the Poison of Scandal been conveyed by sarcastic Gestures, as effectually as by the most elaborate Discourse? (‡) or, if this fail, by secret Insinuations and Whispers of the Reproach itself? (†) — How often have the best of Actions

(*) *Levis et quidam Serum, quid leviùs volat? sed tamen gravitèr emissum, leviter transit, sed graviter urit; leviùs Animum penetrat, sed ejus leviùs exit: leviùs profertur, sed non leviùs revocatur.*

(‡) The nicest Part in human Conversation, and the finest Probe of the Recesses of the Heart of Man, is to guess at the Meaning of the little Hints that are given by the Eye, and to know how to make the best of them. There are some malicious and angry Jerks, dipped in the Gall of Passion, which are imperceptible Thunderbolts, that strike down those they are levelled at. Many Times a Word has thrown down headlong from the Pinnacle of Favour, those whom the Murmurings of a whole People, combined against them, could not so much as shake. There are other Hints which produce an Effect quite contrary (viz.) which support and increase the Reputation of a Man to whom they are directed. But seeing they are artfully glanced, so are they to be cautiously received: for the Security consists in guessing at the Intention, and the Blow, sure soon, is always seen. (*)

(†) "A Whisperer defileth his own Soul, and is hated wherever he dwelleth; for such have disturbed many that were at Peace, and separated chief Friends." Serm. CXIV.

Actions been stamped with the Imputation of proceeding from a bad Motive, by a misterious Insinuation? — How often does the Reputation of an helpless Person bleed by a Report, which the Party, who is at the Pains to propogate it, beholds with much Pity and tender Fellow-feeling, is sorry for it, and hopes it is not true. — Of the same malign Aspect, and equally atrocious, are those, who give us to understand, that they know a great Deal, but are too tender of their Friend's Reputation to disclose it. (*) A barbarous Kind of Tenderness truly! It is like signing a Blank, and leaves us at Liberty to suppose the worst that can be imagined. (†)

So fruitful is this Vice in Variety of Expedients, to satiate, as well as disguise itself!

But, if these SMOOTHER Weapons cut so sore, what shall we say of OPEN and UNRELENTING Scandal, subjected

Dic, age, nam crudis odium et dulcore Voluntas,

Whispering in Company has ever been looked upon as an Excess of ill Manners; for, we have naturally a Curiosity to divine what others say & feel a secret Indignation to be shut out of the Intelligence. Such as are excluded their Mysteries, have Reason to think that you talk at them, or else despise them. See the 3d Paragraph of No. 148 of the Spectator.

(*) *Incipit effari, mediisque in fletus resilit.*

Cum Exceptione laudatur.

(†) All Trust is dangerous that is not entire: It is best to speak all, or to conceal all.

is tied to no Caution, is tied down to no Restraint? If the One, like an Arrow shot in the Dark, does nevertheless so much secret Mischief; this, like the Pestilence which rageth at Noon-Day, sweeps all before it, levelling without Distinction the Good and the Bad; a Thousand fall beside it, and ten thousand on its Right hand; — they fall, so sure in this tender Part of them, as sometimes never to recover either the Wounds, or Anguish of Heart which they have occasioned. — But,

There is nothing so bad which will not admit of something to be said in its Defence. — I shall, therefore shew,

First, How far, and in what Cases, the Laws of Religion and good Order may allow us herein.

II. The general Causes of the real evil Practice. — And then,

III. The Motives and Means of preventing it.

First, The Excuses which Men plead herein, and some of them are truly allowable, and also Matter of strict Duty; as in the Case of notorious Offenders, where public Justice requires that we should speak the Truth of them, though ever so evil, that Justice may be administred righteously, in Order to

their Suppreſſion; (*) but, this is a Duty which we are ſeldom called upon and compelled to practiſe. — Again,

We may alſo ſpeak of the Faults of others, when we can hope thereby to reclaim them, and frame them to better Actions. — Or,

When a Perſon becomes a Proverb of Reproach, we may point him out to Others, as an Example, (‡) ſuffering the Puniſhment of his Sins; Where the Baſeneſs of a deſigning Perſon makes common Caution neceſſary, Or the Notoriety of Facts makes open Abhorrence our Duty, there we are allowed to ſpeak our Minds with Freedom: For, it is a Matter of great Conſequence, &c. (under)

But, if in his own Perſon there we have no Right to publiſh them; becauſe we can anſwer no good End by it: but where they affect, or may affect, Others, it

(*) Tho there is a great Deal due to Character, yet there is much more owing to Truth; which ſhould never, in this Caſe, be concealed for the Advantage of any Character whatever. If, by concealing one Man's Fault, we be injurious to another, we aſſume the Guilt we conceal, and, by the Laws both of God and Man, are judged acceſſary.

Manifeſta Peccata non ſunt occulta Correctione, ſed raro ſed paſtim ſunt arguenda, qui palam nocent; ut dum operta Objurgatione ſanantur, bi, qui ex his audiunt, aliquantulum, corrigantur: dum enim Unus corripitur, Plurimi emendantur. — Bonis quoque, qui multi pariit.

(‡) *Inſpicere, quisquis de ſpecimine tu Vitæ omnium jubet, ut ab aliis ſumere Exemplum tibi.*

It is our Duty to warn as many as we think proper, as our Regard being had to our own Safety. Only here we take this Caution along with us: before we undertake to undeceive others, let us be sure, we are not deceived ourselves. That Rule which a celebrated Philosopher laid down for the Conduct of the Understanding in judging of the Truth of things, is as necessary for our Conduct in judging aright of the Characters of Men, [viz] always to suspend our Judgment, till we have got clear, distinct, and decisive, Evidence. Never proceed upon any slender Surmises, and precarious Conjectures, the Workmanship of the Brain. Proportion your Assent to the Clearness of the Proofs upon which it is built.

But, where a Man's Vices are so flagrant, and his Character so infamous, that there is no Danger of his imposing upon others, there, the less we say of him, so much the better, unless it be our Design to raise an Indignation in ourselves or others against the like Practices. To be often inveighing against his Vices, however notorious, looks as if we took a Complacency in dwelling on his Faults. And it is not the Property either of Wisdom or Charity to pursue a Matter, where no Good can be attained.

The Sum of all is this: We may speak ill of a Man,

their Suppression; (*) but, this is a Duty which we are seldom called upon and compelled to practise. — Again;

We may also speak of the Faults of others, when a Matter of great Consequence to the Publick, that the Characters of wicked Men should sometimes be universally known, as well as the Characters of the Virtuous.

Where a Man's Vices only hurt himself, and terminate in his own Person there we have no Right to publish them; because we can answer no good End by it: but where they affect, or may affect, Others, it

(*) Tho there is a great Deal due to Character, yet there is much more owing to Truth; which should never, in this Case, be concealed for the Advantage of any Character whatever. If, by concealing one Man's Fault, we be injurious to another, we assume the Guilt we conceal, and, by the Laws both of God and Man, are judged accessary.

Manifesta Peccata non sunt occulta Correctione tegenda, sed palam sunt arguenda, qui palam nocent; ut dum aperta Objurgatione sanantur, & qui ea imitando, deliquerint, corrigantur? dum enim Unus corripitur, Plurimi emendantur. — Boni quoque qui multi pariit.

(†) *Inspicere, quæ in speculum, in Vitas omnium jubeo, ut ab aliis sumere Exemplum tibi.*

Serm. CXIV.

Man, after we have gained a competent Knowledge, and formed a right Judgment, of his Character, provided we think it necessary to detect him, either because the Public-Good requires it, or left any particular Person, whose Good we have at Heart, should be infected by his Company, or over-reached by his Craft: but where there are no Reasons of Conscience to make a good Man speak, there a wise Man will hold his Peace.

But, — Though, &c. (under) —

But, — Though it is our Duty not to speak ill of any Man, without some of the Reasons here mentioned; yet it does not follow that we ought to speak WELL of every one promiscuously, and in general: because we ought to make a Distinction, where there is a Difference: We ought to pay the Tribute of Praise, where Praise is due; Otherwise we rob the Good of THAT Fame, which is a Debt, to Merit only, by putting all Men and upon a Level: He who commends every one, in Essect commends no one at all. An undistinguishing Praise confounds the Characters of Men, as well as an undistinguish-

ing

ing Cenſure: juſt as overmuch Light has the ſame Effect, as overmuch Darkneſs; we ſee nothing as it really is. By throwing an undiſtinguiſhed Glare of Praiſe on every Object, we perceive no object at all in its juſt and genuine Light.

There has been ſo much Proſtitution of Applauſe, that ſcarce any Commendation is valuable, but what comes from thoſe who can diſcommend with Impunity, and commend without an Expectation of a Reward.

Theſe are particular Inſtances, and to which more, perhaps, might be added; though even here, (as in moſt other Caſes,) Change of Circumſtances may greatly alter the Nature of things, and may make it no eaſy Matter to fix the Bounds between Right and Wrong.

To this general Rule, therefore, we ought to keep, [viz] to be very cautious and reſerved in ſpeaking even the Ill of Others which we know to be true; (*) and to abſtain from it, unleſs upon good and warrantable

(*) To conceal the real Faults of our Neighbours, and to ſpeak of them with the ſame Tenderneſs and Reſerve, as we, on all Occaſions, deſire ſhould be done to us, is both reaſonable and juſt, & more generous by far than to divulge them. It is a great and noble thing to cover the Blemiſhes, and excuſe the Failings, if poſſible, of Others; to draw a Curtain before their Errors, and diſplay their Perfections; to bury their Weakneſſes in Silence, and proclaim their Virtues upon the Houſe-top.

blameable Reserve, left we should be thought to act out of Malice, Secret Revenge, or even from an inward Pleasure in revealing the Faults of others; than which, nothing can be more base, and who generally receive Part of their just Reward in the Contempt and Abomination which is usually bestowed upon them.

Men have their bad and their good Qualities; in speaking of them, therefore, we should have Regard to both; otherwise, by exposing all that is faulty in a Man, and by suppressing all that is commendable, we make him appear far worse than he really is.

They who will observe nothing in a wise Man but his Oversights and Follies; and nothing in a good Man but his Failings and Infirmities, may render them very despicable. If we should heap together all the passionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the best Man, all that he hath said or done amiss in his whole Life, and present it all at one View, concealing his Wisdom and Virtues, the Man, in this Disguise, would look like a Madman or Fury; (*) and yet, if his Life were fairly re-

Chaff from among the Corn, and lay it aside by itself.

The Critic applied himself to the Task with great Industry and Pleasure, and after having made the due Separation, was presented by Apollo with the Chaff for his Pains. — See No. 451, of the Spectator, on Lampoons, Libels, &c.

firmities and Failings, he would appear to all the World an admirable and excellent Person; but, how many of great soever a Man's ill Qualities may be, it is but just that, with all his heavy Load of Faults, he should have his Praise of the few and real Virtues that are in him. (*)

(*) The Mischeifs of a good Many, which give an ill-natured Pleasure to little Minds, suggest to every great Mind the most melancholy Ideas of the Weakness of human Nature in general, but no spiteful Reflections against his Weakness in particular. He, therefore, that would insinuate any thing from such Cases to his Neighbour's Disadvantage, is guilty of great Injustice to his Credit.

It is the Business of a true Critic to discover Beauties, as well as Blemishes, and, by a due balancing of Both, to pass a sound Judgment upon the Whole. Indeed, A true Critic ought to dwell rather upon Excellences than Imperfections, to distinguish the concealed Beauties of a Person or Performance, & communicate to the World such things as are worthy Observation, and all Imperfections to be cleared up, rectified, and amended: Whereas, these, and these only, are they, which a sour Critic attacks with the greatest Vindness.

Indoctus, doctumque fugat Recitator acerbus;
Quem vero arripuit, tenet, occiditque legendo.

See No. 592, of the Spectator.

Whoever thinks a faultless Piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e're shall be.
Aliquandò bonus dormitat Homerus.
Let such teach others, who themselves excel,
And censure freely who have written well.

The great Pleasure, &c. (under)

their Virtues we write in Water. The Evil Men do, lives after them, The Good is often interred with their Bones; such is the Depravity of our Nature, and the Force of Envy and Malice. For these Reasons it is that Lying, Slander, & Tale-bearing are so much encouraged, and because of these things it is that Calumny has more Power to persuade than either Truth or Reason.

As to these Rules of Criticism, it is certain that the most celebrated Works have taken their Prejudice unjustly condemned; as Paradise-Lost, by Bentley, and other Works have been taken in hand on Purpose to ridicule them, to shew the Skill of the Critic in detecting Faults without any Design to do Justice to their Beauties; but notwithstanding these and many more Abuses of Criticism, it is of the greatest Use to Learning & Men of literary Abilities, for without this, Authors would be careless, it Happens that Faults would not

against Man, that "to be guilty of no Errors, is only peculiar to the Divine Nature:" and, it is as certain, that most Man is subject to many: none are absolutely good, but by Comparison with those who are worse; and he stands in the highest Rank of Perfection, who is least infected with the spreading Evil.

To judge impartially, therefore, we are to put Men's good Qualities in the Balance against their bad Ones, and if the Scale of the first outweighs, the latter ought not to be brought into the Account. Whereas, on the Contrary, a small Acquaintance with the World, will evince, that the good and great Actions of Men, are, by a certain Malignity of Temper, represented as Trifles; whilst, at the same Time, their little Mistakes are magnified to an enormous Size. — Besides,

He may have since been sensible of his Fault, and by Repentance and Amendment God hath forgiven him. — Ought not Man, therefore, to cease from a Remembrance of it? and shall no Time, nor honourable Series of virtuous Actions obliterate it from before us? (*) Truly happy is it for us, that "the

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The great Pleasure Men take in critiquing upon small Faults, to vitiates their Taste, that it renders them unfit to be affected with any Beauties whatever, like the eye of the Eagle-Vulture. But we hesitate [illegible] This Work good, which maintains for a considerable Time a Majority of Suffrages in its Favour. The favourable Opinion of various Nations for many Ages is an *infallible* Criterion [illegible]

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Serm. CXIV.

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of an Author's singular Excellence, and it is certain that to call in Question the Merits of those Books which have long survived their Authors, contributes more to disgrace the Critic, than to diminish

The Failings of good Men are commonly more published in the World, than their good Deeds; & one Fault of a well-deserving Man shall meet with more Reproaches, than all his Virtues, Praise: such is the Force of Ill-will and Ill-nature. Men's evil Manners live in Brass, their Virtues we write in Water. The Evil Men do, lives after them, The Good is often interred with their Bones; such is the Depravity of our Nature, and the Force of Envy and Malice. For these Reasons it is that Lying, Slander, & Tale-bearing are so much encouraged, and because of these things it is that Calumny has more Power to persuade than either Truth or Reason.

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be discovered or publickly known, and there would be very little Accuracy and Improvement in any Art, Science, or Literature in general, and so in Time we might sink into Ignorance and Barbarism; but new Men of Erudition and Candour are a sort of Masters of the Ceremony in the Court of Letters, thro' whose Assistance we are not only freed much Trouble, and guarded against many literary Errors, but easily introduced into some of the first and best Company, and thereby are greatly improved and entertained.

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Serm. CXIV.

" the Thoughts of God are not as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways." — Which brings me

II. To point out the Riſe and Origin of this Evil, in Order that knowing the too general Cauſes and Occaſions of it, we may the more heedfully guard againſt it.

It generally takes its Riſe, either from an Ill-will to Mankind, — a private Inclination to make ourſelves eſteemed — an Oſtentation of Wit — a Vanity of being thought in the Secrets of the World, or from a Deſire of gratifying any of theſe Diſpoſitions of Mind in thoſe with whom we converſe. — And,

First, One of the ſtrongeſt Temptations to this Vice is, where we have received an Injury from any Perſon, and take this ungenerous Way of retorting it; But, we ſhould remember, that This is very unchriſtian; and it would better become us, contrary-wiſe, to return good for evil, and even to defend the Reputation of thoſe who have been moſt forward to injure us: But, if we cannot do this, let us reſolve never to ſpeak of him at all any further than our own Self-Defence obligeth us, till we are calm enough to examine Matters more minutely: — Whatever the Ferment of Paſſion ſuggeſts, it is either entirely, or, at leaſt, in ſome Meaſure, falſe. (*) We all

(*) Prejudice may be conſidered as a conſtant *falſe Medium* of viewing things, for prejudiced Perſons not only never ſpeak well, but alſo never think well of thoſe whom they diſlike, and the *whole* Character and Conduct is conſidered with an Eye to that *particular* thing which offends them.

Some Perſons having once taken a Diſlike to any Perſon or Thing, are ſo obſtinate that ſay what you will they are not *convincible*.

When once perſons I wiſh Prejudice, we can find Faults in the *beſt* Characters, & if diſpoſed to compare them with *ourſelves*, by holding the Balance in *our own Hands*, we can make them preponderate as we pleaſe. Where Prejudice or Partiality holds the Scale, a *Grain*

[under] of

ſee thro' a Glaſs darkly, but Paſſion increaſes the Obſcurity, by magnifying Injuries beyond their due Proportion. (†) This we all acknowledge in our cooler Hours; and yet moſt unaccountably forget it the next Provocation. One of theſe Rules we muſt adhere to; but the FIRST would be a noble Exerciſe of Virtue, and ſuch a Triumph over our own Paſſions, as would afford us infinitely more Satisfaction than any Revenge we could take upon our Adverſary, and beſides, would, in the End, effectually ſuppreſs all Malevolence againſt us: for, He muſt be truly hard indeed who is not to be melted down by theſe Acts of Tenderneſs and Love. (*) — Again,

Another Cauſe of it, is Envy. When we are pained at obſerving ſuperior Excellence in others, we are reſtleſs till we find ſome Imperfection that may ſully the Brightneſs of their Characters; — we exult at the real or imaginary Appearance of Defect, and publiſh the glad Tidings with Pleaſure, thereby bringing down their Character to a Level with ours; ſince we cannot advance ours to the ſame Eminence. We cannot outſtrip by fair and direct Means, and therefore, endeavour baſely to ſupplant them. But, if this be the Temper of our Soul, we cannot take too much Pains to conquer it: — Let us

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First, One of the strongest Temptations to this Vice is, where we have received an Injury from any Person, and take this ungenerous Way of retorting it; But, we should remember, that This is very unchristian; and it would better become us, contrary-wise, to return good for evil, and even to defend the Reputation of those who have been most forward to injure us: But, if we cannot do this, let us resolve

of Slander or Detraction will turn the Balance.

If once to Prejudice the Soul's resign'd,
If Pre-possession gains th' unwary Mind,
In vain pleders poor Innocence her Plea,
For as our Passions dictate we decree;
Justice no more suspends her *equal* Scale,
But Spite or Passion over Truth prevail.
If Anger kindles, check th' impetuous Flame;
Nor let your Tongue traduce an absent Name;

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make frequent Reflections on the Baſeneſs of being grieved at the Merit and Happineſs of others, and be aſhamed of ſo mean and unworthy a Paſſion. (*)

But, — Beſides the mere Deſire of doing Miſchief, which is Malice; or the Deſire of doing it to thoſe above us, which is Envy; or to thoſe who have offended us, which is Revenge; or from the more general Endeavour to depreſs others in Order to raiſe ourſelves

(*) Let any One conſider the various Intereſts, Competitions, and Miſunderſtandings which ariſe amongſt Men, and he will ſoon ſee that he is not unprejudiced and impartial; that he is not neutral enough, to truſt himſelf with talking of the Character & Concerns of his Neighbour, in a free, careleſs, and unreſerved Manner. - There is perpetually, (and often it is unattended to,) a Rivalſhip amongſt People of one Kind or another, in Reſpect to Wit, Beauty, Learning, Fortune, and that One thing will inſenſibly influence them to ſpeak to the Diſadvantage of others, even where there is no formed Malice, or particular ill Deſign.

Since, therefore, it is ſo hard to enter into this Subject without offending, the firſt thing to be obſerved, is, that People ſhould learn to decline it; to get over that ſtrong Inclination Moſt have to be talking of the Concerns and Behaviour of others.

Men of ſolid Senſe and Virtue ſeldom envy others, or think themſelves deſpiſed; becauſe few, or none are apt to think themſelves ſlighted, except thoſe that deſerve to be ſo. We need not envy any one, nor conſequently detract from him. Let him be our better as he is called, provided he is not our better in, what is beſt of all, Religion & Virtue. The Virtuous and the Good are the only Perſons to be envied; If there were a better Way to be taken, [viz] to make ourſelves as virtuous and good as they are, by doing all the Good we can, and purpoſing more than we can do.

ourſelves the higher, which is the miſtaken Effort of a very mean Ambition; there is yet another Principle, which is apt to lead us into the ſame Offence; and becomes one Cauſe of that Calumny, which ſprings from ſo many Sources.

We have all a Deſire to be agreeable to our Companions; and finding, that Converſation is never ſo well reliſhed, as when ſeaſoned with Slander; what can we do, but conform to the Taſte of thoſe we live with, & be cenſorious out of Civility? — But, Not to compliment our own Nature too far, perhaps, the Fault may not be wholly their's with whom we converſe. Our Talent, it may be, lies the ſame Way with their Taſte: we have a Genius, it is poſſible, turned for Satyr, above any other Species of Compoſition. In That Caſe, it will be no Wonder, if we appear to leſs Advantage upon a different Topic; and that our Panegyricks, growing in an UNKINDLY Soil, are found diſtaſteful, & unſavoury. How often is the Man of Wit and Humour expoſed to Temptations of this Kind? who, when in Poſſeſſion of a diverting Matter, cannot find in his Heart to ſuppreſs it, tho' the Reputation of his Neighbour ſuffers by repeating it. But, how greatly is this to be lamented, that the fooliſh Vanity of being thought witty ſhould deſtroy every Sen-

ment of Humanity in the Soul, and cauſe a Man, who is otherwiſe innocent and inoffenſive, to ſport with the moſt valuable of all things, the good Name and Reputation of his Neighbour, without the leaſt Remorſe! (*) — But, Be

(*) *Ferius ſpargit Proſtigias Proſtigator. — Omnium Scenarum Homo eſt. — Homo ad Jocum factus.*

Wit and Humour are two Qualities that every One admires; moſt People aim at it; all fear it; and few love it, except in themſelves. It recommends ſo highly in Converſation, that there are not two Men in three, who do not pretend to the One or the Other of them; and yet their Pretences, ſeriouſly examined, are either founded on Impudence or Affectation. Nothing is ſo much admired, or ſo little underſtood, as Wit; for, tho' there is nothing more diſtant from it, than Folly; yet, like Eaſt and Weſt, they may meet in a Point, and produce Actions, that are but a Hair's Breadth from each other.

True Raillery ſhould be a Defence for good and virtuous Works, and ſhould only deſign the Deriſion of extravagant, and the Diſgrace of vile and diſhonourable things. — This kind of Wit ought to have the Nature of Salt, to which it is uſually compared; which preſerves and keeps ſweet the good and ſound Parts of all Bodies, and only frets, dries up, & deſtroys thoſe Humours which putrify and corrupt: Contrary to which we find the Wit of Man does more uſually exert itſelf in Satire and Cenſure, than in Praiſe and Panegyrick; in Raillery in Company, in Flaſhes of Merriment, or ſuch trivial Operations as diſgrace and degrade the Eſſence of it. But, it is an odious Spirit to be better pleaſed in detecting Faults, than in commending Virtues.

If therefore, you have Wit, (which I am not ſure that I wish you, unleſs you have the ſame Time, at leaſt an equal Portion of Judgement to keep it in good Order,) wear it like your Sword in the Scabbard, and do not brandiſh it to the Terror of the whole Company. — The it tell no particular Perſon; and abominably, from the Malignity of

Be the Fault in Us, or in Others, we are ſtill by no Means innocent. If the Fault be in Others, we ought

of the human Heart, pleaſes all, yet, upon Reflection, it frightens all too. Every one thinks it may be his Turn next, and will hate you for what he finds you could ſay of him, more than be obliged to you for what you do not ſay. — Appear, therefore, to have rather leſs, than more Wit than you really have. A wiſe Man will live at leaſt as much within his Wit as his Income.

Content yourſelf, therefore, with good Senſe and Reaſon, which, at the long Run, are ever ſure to pleaſe every one, who has either.

Bear this great Truth always in your Mind, that you may be admired for your Wit, if you have any; but that nothing, but good Senſe and good Qualities can make you to be beloved. Theſe are ſubſtantial, Every-Day's Wear; whereas, Wit is as a Holiday Suit, which People wear chiefly to be ſtared at.

Good-nature is more agreeable in Converſation than Wit, and gives a certain Air to the Countenance, which is more amiable than Beauty. It ſhews Virtue in the faireſt Light; takes off, in ſome Meaſure, from the Deformity of Vice, and makes even Folly and Impertinence ſupportable. It ought, certainly, to be the firſt Point aimed at in Society, to gain the Good-will of thoſe with whom we converſe. And, the Way to this, is, to ſhew that we are well-diſpoſed towards them. To be extremely ſharp, then, and keen, (as the Term is,) in our Expreſſions to our Familiars, muſt be very abſurd.

To rally well, it is abſolutely neceſſary that Kindneſs ſhould run thro all we ſay, and we muſt ever preſerve the Character of a Friend, to ſupport our Pretenſions to be free with a Man. Contrary-wiſe, it is really ſurpriſing to ſee how unaccountably it prevails among Men, to take the Liberty of diſpleaſing each other: inſomuch, that One would ſometimes not unreaſonably think, the Contention was, Who ſhould be moſt diſagreeable. When, if we inquire into the Reaſon, it is only done for the Exercie of WIT. The Man who has it, is oftentimes ſo

ought not to partake in it; if in Ourselves we should correct it. Should

enamoured of it, so captivated with the Attention, the Praise & Courtship it procures him, that he cannot allow himself to moderate & correct it; to which the Ill-will and Selfconceit, (so much abounding in the World,) gives a particular Relish. — Besides, There is often in the Character of Wits themselves such a Defect in more material Accomplishments, and so much Envy, as to bend their own Inclination to the malicious Abuse of their Talent.

On these Accounts it is no Wonder so much Scandal is spoke in the Form of Wit. Much of That which may seem innocent, is not so; and the Moment any One is held-forth in a ridiculous Point of View, a Prejudice is grounded against him: Wit embitters an evil Report; and the Thoughtless spread it even for the sake of the Jest. Truth is often violated to make their Story palatable: — The Mirth it excites, reconciles them to the Impropriety of it, or rather diverts them from thinking it at all improper. Most of us are apt to fall in with this; to consider the Wit of a Story that is false, and the Mirth that it occasions, as an Apology for its Falsehood; forgetting that Truth is sacred, and a good Name precious. — Besides, They are happy to ridicule that Virtue which they cannot imitate, and which is their perpetual Reproach. Whilst the modest and diffident, who are thus evil-spoken of, on Account of their Virtue, may be tempted to conceal, or abandon it, so to throw the least Word in its Way, that may give it new Matter for Inveteracy. *Tua Vox fortior omnium Volucrum Genus abigit.*

If we have any Talent, therefore, for saying keen & satirical things, let us be superior to the Talent we possess, by showing how little Stress we lay upon it, when it comes in Competition with our good Nature. — *Claudite jam Rivos, Pueri, sat Prata biberé,*

Et jam Tempus Equum spumantia solvere Colla.

Nimia Pluvia Frumentum putrefacit.

It were easy to shew how the Witty, who give Way to evil-speaking, are gradually betrayed into the worst Kind of it, and how it produces

Should we think it reaſonable, were the Caſe our own, to be abuſed merely for Sport, and belied only in

duces the worſt Effects both on themſelves and others. Every one againſt whom they employ their malicious Wit becomes an Enemy; their Paſſion for it, in Time, grows ſo violent, that they ſometimes ſacrifice a Friend to it; rather chooſing to loſe their beſt Friend, than their worſt Jeſt: there being few to be found, but are more concerned for the Reputation of Wit and Senſe, than Honeſty and Virtue. Even thoſe who court, admire, and flatter him, dare not truſt him. — It is not the Way to be honoured. It is not the Way to be uſeful; and ſerves only (if affected,) to render his Folly more ridiculous, and expoſes him to be the Jeſt of the Company, when he endeavoured to be the Admiration. — Thoughts merely witty and ludicrous only pleaſe the Fancy for a while, & raiſe a Blaze of Mirth as ſhort-lived as the Crackling of Thorns, to which Solomon compares it. An ill natured Man may be a Prodigy of Parts; he may have an uncommon Brightneſs, but then it is, like that of a Summer's Sun, intolerable for its Brightneſs; to ſhun its ſcorching Beams, we retreat into the Shade, & had rather bury ourſelves in Retirement, than endure his Converſation. That Wit is truly amiable, which gladdens and enlivens every thing; which ſhines with a Luſtre gentle, but not faint, and powerful, but not glaring.

He who endeavours to oblige the Company by his Good nature, never fails of being beloved; he who ſtrives to entertain it by his good Senſe, never fails of being eſteemed: but he who is continually aiming to be witty, generally miſcarries of his Aim: his Aim & Intention is to be admired, but it is his Misfortune either to be deſpiſed or deteſted; to be deſpiſed for Want of Judgment, or deteſted for Want of Humanity. For we ſeldom admire the Wit, when we miſlike the Man.

There are a great many to whom the World would be ſo charitable, as to allow them to have a tollerable Share of *common* Senſe, if they had not ſet up for ſomething more than *common*, ſomething very uncom-

in Order to be laughed at. The Jeſt is loſt in the Injuſtice

mon, bright, and witty. If we ſhould trace the Faults of Converſation up to their original Source, moſt of them might, we think, be reſolved into this; that Men had rather appear *ſhining*, than be *agreeable* in Company: they are endeavouring to raiſe Admiration, inſtead of gaining Love and Good-will: whereas the latter is in every One's Power, the former in that of very few.

Satire and Invectives are the eaſieſt Kind of Wit; almoſt any Degree of it will ſerve to abuſe and find Fault; but to carve a beautiful Image, and to poliſh it, requires great Art and Dexterity. A little Art, and a great Deal of Ill-nature will furniſh a Man with Satire; but the greateſt Inſtances of Wit is to commend well.

There are Abundance of obſcene, and a great many more railing and ſatirical Wits, but very few delicate. A Man muſt have Manners and Politeneſs, to trifle with a good Grace; and a copious Fancy to play handſomely on little things, to create Matter of Raillery, & make ſomething out of Nothing. He who repreſents *great* things with Sublimity, & *little* Ones with Propriety, will always make the One admirable, and the Other pleaſant. True Wit conſiſts in retrenching all uſeleſs Diſcourſe, and in ſaying a great Deal in a few Words. Raillerie are not good, unleſs they are lively and well ſeaſoned; Length enervates and ſpoils them.

A Man that hath no good Quality but Courage, is in a very ill Way towards making an agreeable Figure in the World, becauſe that which he has ſuperior to Others, cannot be exerted, without raiſing himſelf Enemies - The Satyriſt is in the ſame Condition. To know barely how to ſlaughter Men; to be better ſkilled than others in rooting out Society, and deſtroying Nature, is to excell in a very fatal Science. A good Underſtanding with a bad Will, makes a very unhappy Conjunction. That is an unlucky Wit, which is employed to do Evil. A pleaſant Man is rarely to be met with; and a Perſon, tho he was born ſo, muſt have a great Deal of Delicacy to maintain the Character

long

Injustice and Cruelty: It is a serious Matter, at least, on the Side of the Sufferer. — Besides, The

long; but commonly he that makes us laugh, is not sure to be esteemed. Knowledge will become Folly, if good Sense do not take Care of it. — There is this Difference between a Man of Sense and Modesty, and a Person of Wit, of Cunning, and Impudence; One shines in his Abilities; the Other debases himself, and is a Disgrace, as well as Nuisance and Trouble to Society. Some "under a Fool's Cap, exercise a Knave's Wit;" making a seeming Simplicity the Excuse of their Impudence: but there is not a greater Pest in human Society than a perverse Craft under such a Mask & Disguise. See No. 25. of the Spectator.

A bright Imagination, while it is subservient to an honest & noble Soul, is a Faculty which makes a Man justly admired by Mankind, & furnishes with Reflections upon his own Actions; which adds Delicacies to the Feast of a good Conscience; But, when Wit descends to wait upon sensual Pleasures, or promotes the base Purposes of any Passion, it is then to be contemned in Proportion to its Excellence. It is only to be valued as it is applied; and is very pernicious when accompanied with Vice. If a great Wit has not a little Wisdom joined with it (like Wild-fire,) it attacks every thing that comes in its Way, without any Respect or Discrimination. Wit out of Season is a grievous Ill.

Cultus Fortuitæ prudi Dolo Sapientiæ.

See the latter part of No. 169. of the Spectator, with No. 221.

The few following supplimental Rules may be of Service to regulate it. — We should endeavour to wear out the Vein of Pedantry and Affectation, to have our Sense esteemed to its Merit; we should check in ourselves all Vanities of glittering on the Imagination of another with the Lustre of our Parts; we should learn to think with the Wise, and talk with the Mean; to keep our sublime Notions to Ourselves, and converse in the common received Sentiments of Mankind; to believe, that tho' nothing so much gains upon the Affections as extemporary Eloquence, yet that we very rarely meet with any who excell

The Hearers too are imposed upon, and made the Instruments of conveying a Falshood, and doing an Injury. The Evil spreads fast and is multiplied, and probably increased and aggravated in its Course; and there is no End of the Confusion and Mischief.

But further. — In Others, the mere Love of Talking prevails. (*) "We are they that ought to speak;

cell in it; that, if we resolve to please, we should never speak, to gratify any particular Vanity and Passion of our own, but always with a Design either to divert or inform the Company: that we should talk extremely little of Ourselves, especially of our own Wisdom and Merit, and to be sometimes silent, on a Subject where every One is satisfied we could speak well; as by this, we should often be thought no less knowing in other Matters, where, perhaps, we are wholly ignorant. A seasonable Silence has its Emphasis. It is so usual with most Men to judge of things so very slightly and superficially, that the most ordinary Words and Actions, set off with a good Grace, and some little Knowledge how Matters go in the World, very often gain a Man more Reputation than the most profound Wisdom and Learning. But, above all, we should prefer solid Sense to Wit, and never study to be diverting, without being useful; to let no Jest intrude upon good Manners, nor say any thing that may either hurt or offend.

See No. 172. of the Spectator, on the proper Application of Talents.

The Observation of these few Rules, duly attended to, will secure Wit from Odium, and establish the Reputation of an imaginary One, where Conduct alone conceals Folly. See No. 25. of the Spectator, with No. 62.

(*) "The Lips of Talkers will be telling such things as pertain not unto them; but the Words of such as have Understanding, are weighed in the Balance. The Heart of Fools is in their Mouth, but the Mouth of the Wise is in their Heart."

speak; Who is Lord over us?" (w) & consequently mow-down

(w) Talkativeness is usually called a *feminine* Vice; but it is not safe to go into *masculine* Company, where it will be as hard to wedge in a Word, as at a female Converse. - See the third Paragraph of No. 118 of the Spectator, with No. 247. — But certainly, however we are supplied with Wit and Learning, we ought still to be more willing to hear, than to teach; it being a great Folly to be more ready to show all that is in us, rather than learn Knowledge of another; to spend our own Stock, rather than get new. - *Dedecet Viros muliebriter rixari.*

Quendam multa garrientem, hoc Dicto Zeno corripuit, inquiens, "Ob id binas habemus Aures, et Os unicum, ut plurima audiamus, loquamur autem paucissima. Duplo plus audiendum, quam loquendum."

Idem audiens Adolescentem nimis garrulum; "Aures (inquit) in Linguam deflexere." Ostendens Adolescentis esse, audire multa, loqui autem pauca. In hoc incumbe, ut libentius audias, quam loquaris: Auribus frequentius uteris, quam Linguâ: Qui enim nescit tacere, nescit loqui.

The wise Man observes, that "there is a Time to speak, and a Time to keep Silence;" we meet with some in this World who seem never to have made the *last* of these Observations. Yet, that these great Talkers do not at all speak from their having any thing to say, every Sentence shews, but only from their Inclination to be talking. Their Conversation is merely an Exercise of the Tongue: no other human Faculty has any Share in it. It is strange these Persons can help reflecting, that, unless they have in Truth a superior Capacity and are in an extraordinary Manner furnished for Conversation, if they are entertaining, it is at their own Expence. Is it possible, that it should never come into Prople's Thoughts to suspect, whether or not it be to their Advantage to shew so very much of themselves? "O that you would altogether hold your Peace, & it should be your Wisdom," says Job. Remember likewise there are Persons who love fewer Words, an inoffensive Sort of People, and who deserve some Regard, though of so dull and composed Tempers for you. Of this Number was the

mow down Reputations with all the Unconcern imaginable;

Son of Sirach: for he plainly speaks from Experience when he says, "As Hills of Sand are to the Steps of the Aged, so is One of many Words to a quiet Man." It is indeed a very unhappy Way these People are in: they in a Manner cut themselves out from all Advantage of Converſation, except that of being entertained with their own Talk: their Buſineſs in coming into Company not being at all to be informed, to hear, or learn; but to diſplay themſelves, or rather to exert their Faculty, and talk without any Deſign at all. And if we conſider Converſation as an Entertainment, as ſomewhat to unbend the Mind; as a Diverſion from the Cares, the Buſineſs, and the Sorrows, of Life; it is, of the very Nature of it, that the Diſcourſe be mutual. This, we ſay, is implied in the very Notion of what we diſtinguiſh by Converſation, or being in Company. Attention to the continued Diſcourſe of One alone grows more painful often, than the Cares and Buſineſs we come to be diverted from. He therefore who impoſes this upon us, is guilty of a double Offence, arbitrarily enjoining Silence upon all the reſt, and likewiſe obliging them to this painful Attention.

Applauſe attends a Moderation in this Reſpect; and we ſhall be valued while we are neither over-ſilent, nor over-talkative; The firſt Error may lay us open to a Cenſure of Stupidity or Scorn; and the latter will render us accuſable of Giddineſs of the Brain. A Multitude of Words, carried on to a diſproportionate Length, fails of the End propoſed, and tires inſtead of pleaſing. Contract your Force, therefore, into a moderate Compaſs, and be nervous rather than copious: but, if at any Time there be Occaſion to indulge a Copiouſneſs of Style, beware it does not run into Looſeneſs and Luxuriance. The Art of pleaſing in Company, is, not to explain things too circumſtantially, (ſee No. 138. of the Spectator,) but to expreſs only one Part, and leave your Hearer to make out the reſt. — In fact,

There are but two Seaſons for a Man to ſhew his Eloquence: the One, when the Matter is neceſſary; the Other, when a Man ſpeaketh that

ginable, and, as they mean no Harm themselves, are

often often he knoweth; in These only, Speech is better than Silence; in all Others, it is better for him to hold his Peace, than to talk.

Pythagoras *de Silentio hæc scite Dicta habet*; - "*Aut file, aut effer meliora Silentio*." - "*Aut Silentium tempestivum, aut Orationem utilem habeat?*" - "*Verba Silentio; Silentium Tempestivitate claude.*"

There is a great Deal of Difference between Writing well, and talking well. The Stile of an Orator is of another Nature than that of a well-bred Conversation; this must be easy in the Delivery, proper in the Phrase, but as short as may be: the Other admits of more various Decorations, a softer Phrase, and a larger Extent.

When a Man expresses himself well upon any Occasion, or falls into an Account of any Subject arising from a Desire of obliging the Company, or from Fulness of the Circumstance itself: In this Case, it is not only pardonable, but agreeable, when a Man takes the Discourse to himself. *Ut Hominis Decus est Ingenium: Ita Ingenii Lumen est Eloquentia.* — But, when we see a Person watching Opportunities for being copious in it exceedingly troublesome, molesting those whom they seek to gratify, derided by those whose Esteem and Admiration they covet, and offensive to such whose Love and Friendship they seek.

Quemadmodum Hirundines perpetuo Garritu Familiaritatis Voluptatem gentant; Sic, Garruli perpetuo obstrepentes, molesti sunt Auditoribus. Si non multa loquerentur, nunquam tam multa locuti essent.

The likeliest Remedies to cure this spreading Malady, are, to reflect in ourselves the Infamies & Disasters attending it: *Sera enim labi necesse est, quicquid multum loqui conatur. Sint tua Verba pauca; tolle Verbositatem Sermonis superflui: Multiloquium non effugit Culpam; linguosis Mutum impunitas est. Sapiens vero paucis utitur Verbis.* "In a Multitude of Words there wanteth not Folly." - And take into our serious Consideration the Practice of what is quite opposite to it. Let us consider how much more beloved, how much more admired, and how far they are reputed to excell in Prudence, who deliver their Minds in few Words, than such as weary out their Audience by long Harangues.

are not conscious that they can do anything. But, Let

If it were needful to say any thing further, to persuade Men to learn this Lesson of Silence, we might put them in Mind, how insignificant they render themselves by this excessive Talkativeness: insomuch that, if they do chance to say any thing which deserves to be attended to and regarded, it is lost in the Variety and Abundance which they utter of another Sort. *Multa Verba negantem arguunt Sapientiam. Sapiens enim non nisi cum Res postulat, loquitur, perpaucis ad interrogata respondens.*

Pauca igitur, quæ tamen auditu digna, loqui memento. Nè multis Verbis pauca comprehendas, sed paucis multam Veritatis multis Verbis non eget. Malè narrando, Fabula depravatur. — Brevity is a great Praise of Eloquence. It is a special Virtue to speak *little* and *well*. — But,

There is one Impertinence, which, above all things, we should carefully take heed of, that when Another is asked the Question, we do not step in to prevent his Reply, by answering Ourselves. Such a Forwardness as This, is not only unbecoming, but injurious & affronting; as by This we seem to intimate, that the Person to whom the Question was put, was not able to resolve it, & that the Propounder had not Discretion enough to know of whom to ask it. *Interrogatus respondi.*

Many Times it happens, that we put Questions, not for Want of an Answer, but only to minister Occasions of Discourse, and to provoke Men to Familiarity, that we may have the Pleasure of their Wit and Conversation: To prevent which by any impertinent Intrusion of our own, is, and must be excessive Rudeness, with Height of Incivility, and must give Distaste, let his Answer be ever so rational: But, if he mistake, he is sure to be derided by all that hear him. — Indeed,

A Man of this Volubility, ought to be extremely careful, that he be not hasty in his Answers, to such as provoke him to talk, on Purpose, perhaps, to make themselves merry at his Expence, and expose him to Derision. For, Some there are, who, not out of any Desire to be satisfied, but merely for Diversion, study certain Questions, and propose them to such as love to multiply Words, purely for this Purpose. Such Men, therefore, ought to take heed how they fall into this Snare,

as

her such learn to talk, and think more (*) on, if they cannot so far bridle their Tongues as to be silent

as if glad of the Occasion; but to consider well the Behaviour of the Propounder, and the Importance of the Subject proposed: to consider Points before they speak Once, as knowing they will answer twice the better for it. *Quicquid dicturus es, prius apud animum tuum expende; multorum enim Cogitationes Linguæ præcurrit. Sapiens non eloquax, sed Sermonis sui præcogitat, et examinat prius in Pectore, quam proferat in Ore. Sapiens non fatim quod loquitur, sed etiam Opportunitatem Loci, et Temporis, et Personæ quam loquitur, diligenter inquirit.*

Not that a Restraint from superfluous Talk, implies that we are to be sullen, or morosely silent: This, instead of a Virtue, is Ill-nature and Obstinacy; and may shew the Reserve more of a Spy, than the Gravity of a prudent Man. This, therefore, should be our Regulation; if there be nothing profitable in speaking necessary to them that hear, nothing of Satisfaction or Delight, then our Talk will be superfluous; for *Words* may be in vain, and to no Purpose, as well as *Deeds*; always remembring, that he who is given to talk, has many Times an Occasion to repent of his Words, but never that he held his Peace.

— *Nulli tacuisse nocet, nocet esse locutum.*
Tutum Silentii Præmium.

Grave Men ought to be considerate in their Speech, and to be eloquent in sententious Words; of gambled Phrase less than that of the Vulgar; or else to be silent, wanting Eloquence. — See Knox's Essays, No. 44. on Conciseness of Style in Writing & Conversation. And also the second Paragraph in No. 198. of the Spectator.

(*) Those who love (as they expressly) to speak their Minds *freely* upon all Occasions, (affronting those above them, insulting those beneath them, and displeasing every One) should first take Care to think justly, as they ought, tenderly of Others, and humbly and soberly of Themselves. A Man of This Make will say a rude thing for the mere Pleasure of saying it, when an opposite Behaviour, full as innocent,

might

lent ſometimes, let them at leaſt confine their Converſation to ſuch Subjects as are perfectly innocent, of which there are great Abundance, both profitable and delightful; & not condeſcend to ſuch, in which the moſt ignorant, fooliſh and illiterate are as capable as they. It is beneath the Worthy to "go about as a Talebearer among the People." That is the Province of the worthleſs, mere leaden Pipes; tho' the Metal be dull, baſe, and ignoble, they ſerve to convey freſh Streams of Intelligence to every Place; we apply Gold, & the nobler Metals, to other Uſes.

It muſt, however, be owned, that Men, who deſerve well in other Reſpects, ſhall be ſometimes guilty of this faſhionable Vice; either becauſe, tho they have a general and ſtanding Conviction that Evil-ſpeaking is a Crime, yet they do not conſider and attend to the Malignity of it at that Juncture; or becauſe the Commonneſs of the Crime inſenſibly reconciles it to their Thought: they ſee it practiſed every

might have preſerved his Friend, and made his Fortune.

Fallit te incautum Pietas tua
Obſequium Amicos; Veritas Odium parit.

He, whoſe honeſt Freedom makes it his Virtue to ſpeak what he thinks, makes it his Neceſſity to think what is good.

Quicquid in Buccam venerit Stultus loquitur.

A Fool uttereth all his Mind, but a wiſe Man keepeth it till afterwards. He hideth his Words for a Time, and the Lips of many ſhall declare his Wiſdom.

every Day, and That makes it familiar to them, and takes off every Idea of Horror.

Not that we perſuade Men to be blind to the Failings of thoſe with whom they converſe. To a Perſon of Diſcernment this is impoſſible: All We would have, is, that we ſhould look on them with Pity, rather than with Diſguſt and Contempt, & inſtead of expoſing them to the Obſervation of others, that we conceal them as carefully as we would our own Faults, or thoſe of our Boſom-friend.

The LAST Cauſe of Evil-ſpeaking is an Ill-Life in general. Thoſe who know a great Deal of Ill themſelves, are apt to ſuſpect Ill of every one elſe. "Thou thoughteſt wickedly, that I was ſuch an one as thyſelf," is the Character which the Pſalmiſt gives of an immoral Perſon. They accuſe People of Wickedneſs, which they do not know to be true; and cenſure them for what they CANNOT know to be true, [viz.] their Intentions, and the Thoughts of their Hearts. They muſt fancy all to be inwardly as bad as themſelves; though ſome are more artful to ſave Appearances. Thus their Talk is a conſtant Satire upon others, and their Actions a living Satire upon themſelves. Let them ſay what hard things they pleaſe; they can do much harder things than they

ſay. Their foul Language is nothing but the overflowings of a much fouler Heart.

Theſe are the Cauſes; & the Publiſher of a Scandal is more or leſs odious to Mankind, and criminal in himſelf, as he is influenced by any one or more of them. — But,

Whatever may be the Occaſion of ſpreading theſe falſe Reports, he ought to conſider, that the Effect of them is equally prejudicial and pernicious to the Perſon at whom they are aimed. The Injury is the ſame, though the Principle from whence it proceeds may be different. — But,

As every One looks upon himſelf with too much Indulgence, when he paſſes a Judgment on his own Thoughts or Actions, and as very few would be thought guilty of this abominable Proceeding, which is ſo univerſally practiſed, and, at the ſame Time, ſo univerſally blamed, I ſhall lay down three Rules by which every Man ſhould examine and ſearch into his own Heart, before he ſtands acquitted to himſelf of that Evil Diſpoſition of Mind which is here mentioned.

Firſt, Let him conſider, whether he does not take Delight in hearing the Faults of others.

2dly, Whether he is not too apt to believe ſuch little blackening Accounts, and more inclined to be credulous

credulous on the unchariable, than on the good-natured Side.

3dly, Whether he is not ready to spread and propagate such Reports as tend to the Disreputation of another.

These are the several Steps by which this Vice proceeds, and grows up into Slander and Defamation.

In the first Place, a Man who takes Delight in hearing the Faults of others, shews sufficiently that he has a true Relish of Scandal, and consequently the Seed of this Vice within him. If his Mind is gratified with hearing the Reproaches which are cast on others, he will find the same Pleasure in relating them, and be the more apt to do it, as he will naturally imagine every one he converses with is delighted in the same Manner with himself.

A Man should endeavour therefore to wear out of his Mind this criminal Curiosity, which is perpetually heightened and inflamed by listening to such Stories as tend to the Disreputation of others.

In the 2d. Place, a Man should consult his own Heart, whether he be not apt to BELIEVE such little blackening Accounts, & more inclined to be credulous on the unchariable, than on the good-natured Side.

Such a Credulity is very vicious in itself, and generally arises from a Man's Conſciouſneſs of his own Secret Corruptions. – It is a pretty ſaying of THALES, "Falſehood is juſt as far diſtant from Truth, as the Ears are from the Eye." By which he would intimate, that a wiſe Man ſhould not eaſily give Credit to the Reports of Actions which he has not ſeen.

I ſhall under this Head mention two or three remarkable Rules to be obſerved in the Caſe.

As Firſt, — We ſhould not give ear to any Accounts of baſe or criminal Actions; but turn off all ſuch Diſcourſe if poſſible; but in Caſe we hear any thing of this Nature, ſo well atteſted that we cannot diſbelieve it, we are to ſuppoſe, that the criminal Action may have proceeded from a good Intention in him who was guilty of it. This is, perhaps, carrying Charity to an Extravagance, but it is certainly much more laudable, than to ſuppoſe, as the ill-natured Part of the World does, that indifferent, and even good Actions, proceed from bad Principles, and wrong Intentions.

In the 3d. Place, a Man ſhould examine his Heart, whether he does not find in it a ſecret Inclination to propagate ſuch Reports as tend to the Diſreputation of another.

When the Diſeaſe of the Mind here mentioned, ariſes

arises to this Degree of Malignity, it discovers itself in its worst Symptom, and is in Danger of becoming incurable. I need not therefore insist upon the Guilt in this last Particular, which every One cannot but disapprove who is not void of Humanity or even common Discretion. I shall only add, that whatever Pleasure any Man may take in spreading Whispers of this Nature, he will find an infinitely greater Satisfaction in conquering the Temptation he is under, by letting the Secret die within his own Breast.

The Motives and Means to prevent Evil-speaking will be the Subject of the next,

Sermon

SERMON CXV.

On the same Subject.

Titus iii. 2. "Speak evil of no Man."

Having already ſhown the Nature, and pointed out the Cauſes of Evil-ſpeaking, the Means and Motives to prevent it, come now to be conſidered.

First, One of the chief Means hereto, is, the Conſideration of the Evils occaſioned by it on all Sides; (*) leading Men but too often to the Commiſſion of thoſe Sins for which they were firſt unjuſtly accuſed (†) When

(*) Slander is a Vice impure in its Source, dangerous in its Effects, and ſometimes irreparable in its Conſequences. It generally ſtrikes at once three mortal Blows. *Detractor*, &c. [under]

"A back-biting Tongue hath diſquieted many, and driven them from Nation to Nation; ſtrong Cities hath it pulled down, and overthrown the Houſes of Great Men. Many have fallen by the Edge of the Sword; but not ſo many as have fallen by the Tongue." See Note (*) Page 197. "Well is he that is defended from it, and that hath not paſſed thro the Venom thereof, who hath not drawn her Yoke, nor been bound in her Bands; for the Yoke thereof is a Yoke of Iron, and her Bands are Bands of Braſs; the Death thereof is an evil Death; the Grave is better than it." It is tolerated in Society, only becauſe almoſt every One has a moſt unhappy Inclination to commit it.

(†) *Cujus rumor juvat, et mendax Infamia terret*

When Men find that their Reputation cannot by any Means be preserved, Right and Wrong THEM become equal to them; and they are but too often equally led to the Commission of the most atrocious Sins. Solomon, very significantly, stiles This teaching Men an evil Lesson against themselves. (*)

Although the Praise of Men is by no Means a Reason why a Man should undertake great and generous Actions, yet it is, I fear, too often the true one. (†) This

(*) *Invidiam placare paras: Virtute relicta?*

(†) *Laudum immensus Cupidus;*
Non pro Virtutibus Gloria petit.
Et secunda facit Peccora Laudis Amor.
Laudis Cupiditas, et Timor Ignominiæ, ad Virtutem excitant.
Gloria incitamur præclara Ingenia.
Favor Pretium dat Vati.

Reputation should be the Darling of human Affections.
Just Glory, which is the Fruit of true Virtue, is not to be rejected.
It is no small Happiness to be thought innocent,
but a far greater to be void of Offence.

The Desire of Glory, the Philosophers themselves acknowledge to be the last thing a wise Man puts off; and, if it is a Bait which Angels shunned, how hard must it be for Souls allyed to Sense to resist it? The Love of Praise is a Passion deeply fixed in the Mind of every extraordinary Person, and those who are most affected with it, seem most to partake of that Particle of the Divinity which distinguishes Mankind from the inferior Creation. The Supreme Being itself is most pleased with Praise and Thanksgiving; the other Part of our Duty is but an Acknowledgment of our Faults, whilst this is the im-

This, then, is a ſore Evil to the Patient, and ſo which

mediate Adoration of his Perfections. It was an excellent Obſervation, that *we then* only deſpiſe Commendation *when* we ceaſe to deſerve it; and we have ſtill extant two Orations of *Tully* and *Pliny*, ſpoken to the greateſt and beſt Princes of all the *Roman* Emperors, who, no doubt, heard with the greateſt Satisfaction, what even the moſt diſintereſted Perſons, and at ſo large a Diſtance of Time, cannot read without Admiration. *Caſar* thought his Life conſiſted in the Breath of Praiſe, when he profeſſed he had lived long enough for himſelf, when he had for his glory. Others have ſacrificed themſelves for a Name which was not to begin till they were dead, giving away themſelves to purchaſe a Sound which was not to commence till they were out of hearing: but by Merit and ſuperior Excellencies, not only to gain, but, whilſt living, to enjoy a great and univerſal Reputation, is the laſt Degree of Happineſs which we can hope for here.

Si Laus allicere nos ad recte faciendum non poteſt; nec Metus quidem a fœdiſſimis Factis poteſt avocare, actum eſt, ilicet. Si Honorem, Famam, et Gloriam, quæ Virtutis Præmia plerique reſpiciunt, tollamus; Nemo Virtutem curabit. Ut deſcendente Sole Terra infacunda jacet; Ita, Artes & Virtutes, ſi Honorem et Laudem Præmia tollas, elangueſcunt.

Ipſe Decor recti Facti ſi Præmia deſint,
Non movet, et gratis pœnitet eſſe probum.
—— Quis enim Virtutem amplectitur ipſam,
Præmia ſi tollas? —— ——

We ſhould do nothing but what is worthy of Praiſe, tho' withal, without aiming at Applauſe; for the Oſtentation of a good Action often eclipſes the Glory of it. He is a good Man whom Commendation for well-doing, encourages; But he is not honeſt who will not be good without Commendation. Whereas, he is truly religious, who dares do good, when for ſo doing he is made infamous.

Thoſe Men only are truly great, who place their Ambition rather in acquiring to themſelves the Conſciouſneſs of worthy Enterprizes, than in the Proſpect of Glory which attends them. Such exalted ſpi-

rits

which the Slanderer is, in a great Measure, to be charged;

He would rather be secretly the Authors of Events which are serviceable to Mankind, than, without being such, to have the Fame of it.

How pitiable were the State of Virtue, if she could not be known but from another's Praise? She is too noble to seek Recompence; and so more will, than can be rewarded.

When, therefore, an eminent Merit is robbed by Artifice or Detraction, it does but increase by such Endeavours of its Enemies; the impotent Pains which are taken to sully it, or diffuse it among a Crowd to the Injury of a single Person, will naturally produce the contrary Effect; the Fire will blaze out, and consume all that attempt to smother what they cannot extinguish.

There is but One thing necessary to keep the Possession of true Glory, which is, to bear the Opposers of it with Patience; and preserve the Virtue by which it was acquired. When a Man is thoroughly persuaded that he ought neither to admire, wish for, or pursue any thing but what is exactly his Duty, it is not in the Power of Seasons, Persons, or Accidents, to diminish his Value. He only is a great Man who can neglect the Applause of the Multitude, and enjoy himself independent of its Favour. This is, indeed, an arduous Task; but it should comfort a glorious Spirit that it is the highest Step to which human Nature can arrive. Triumph, Applause, Acclamation, are due to the Mind of Man; but it is still a more exquisite Delight to say to yourself, you have done WELL, than to hear the whole human Race pronounce you Glorious, except you can sit down with them in your own Reflections. A Mind thus unsolicitous of Fame, may be deserted by its fashionable Admirers and Followers, but will ever be had in Reverence by Souls like itself: the Branches of the Oak endure all the Seasons of the Year, though its Leaves fall off in Autumn; and these too will be restored with the returning Spring.

Reputation is to be preserved with all the Care imaginable; a good Conscience is more to be valued than great Fame, yet we must not neglect

charged, and will in a very large Sense, at the last Day, be answerable for. — But,

Where things do not come to this evil Crisis, it is certainly a very great Wrong done him, and Provocation. — But,

If glect a known Duty to uphold it; for that were to change solid Gold for only burnished Brass.

He that so eagerly pursues Praise, as to reject the Dictates of Reason and Conscience, and only takes care to do what may raise his Esteem among Men, yields himself a Slave to every flattering and deceitful Tongue, and reaps to himself a painful and uneasy Mind. And, If we look upon This in a Christian Sense, it will be found destructive of every right Principle: for, they, "who only do good *to be seen of Men*, must expect no other Reward, than the Portion of those Hypocrites, that love the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God."

As for the Praise given to *indifferent* and *bad* Actions, (the too common Subjects of worldly Praise,) the *former* having no Goodness in them, deserve no Commendation; and our *bad* Actions should make us tremble, and be constant in Prayer, lest we thereby incur that Woe, which our Saviour pronounces against all such, who make Sin the Subject of their Glory, when he says, "Woe unto you when Men speak well of you, for so did their Fathers to the *false* Prophets."

A good Man finds the Reward of his Application to his Duty, in the Testimony of his own Conscience; & the secret Pleasure he feels in discharging it, makes him amends for the Esteem, the Acknowledgements or Praises, which he seldom meets with in the World.

Nothing can be more vain than the counting of popular Applause, if we consider the Emptiness of the Sound, the precarious Tenure, the little Judgment of those who give it, and the narrow Compass it is confined to. — To be covetous of Applause discovers a slender Merit; Self-Conceit is the ordinary Attendant of Ignorance.

See No. 118. of the Spectator.

If the Fact we lay to Others be not true, it is an Injury beyond Imagination, and all possible Reparation: and, though we should afterwards endeavour their Vindication, yet possibly it may not reach so far as the Reproach; or, if it should, may yet perhaps be of no Effect, after contrary Impressions are once received. A Scandal, when it is once gone abroad, is not easily recalled; (*) for, it is not only apt to spread itself wide, but the further it spreads, the more it usually increases its Malignity, every One, out of his Bounty, being apt to add something to it. (†) So

(*) *Homer* gives almost constantly to WORDS, the Epithet of *winged*. "Verba quotidiè volitant, atque revolare nescium". See Note (*) Page 198. As he that lets go a Bird out of his Hand, doth not easily catch her again; so neither is it possible for a Man to recall, and cage again in his Breast, a Word let slip from his Mouth. *Nescit vox missa reverti.*

—— *Semel emissum volat irrevocabile Verbum.*

Bonam Famam tuere, ut perdas, perit enim facilè, sed non facilè sarcitur. Ut Ignis, sic succensus, facilè propagatur, extinctus autem haud facilè reaccenditur: Ita, Famam tuendo facilè efficies, sed restituere extinctam haud facilè queis. "Have Regard to thy Name, for that shall continue with thee above a thousand great Treasures of Gold." "A godly Life hath but a few Days, but a good Name endureth forever."

(†) *Hi narrata ferunt alio, Mensuraque ficti*
Crescit, & auditis aliquid novus adjicit auctor.

Ovid describes the Palace of Fame, as situated in the very Centre of the Universe, and perforated with so many Windows and Avenues

So that the first Author of it neither knows to how as gave her the Sight of every thing that was done in the Heavens, in the Earth, and in the Sea. The Structure of it was contrived in so admirable a Manner, that it collected every Word which was spoken in the whole Compass of Nature; so that the Palace, (says the Poet,) was always filled with a confused Hubbub of low dying Sounds, the Voices being almost spent and worn out before they arrived at this general Rendezvous of Speeches and Whispers.

——— *Magnes it Fama per Urbes.*
Fama, Malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum,
Mobilitate viget, Viresque acquirit eundo;
Parva Metu primo: mox sese attollit in Auras,
Ingrediturque solo, et Caput inter Nubila condit.
Illam Terra Parens, Ira irritata Deorum,
Extremam, ut perhibent, Cœo, Enceladoque Sororem
Progenuit, Pedibus celerem, et pernicibus Alis,
Monstrum horrendum ingens, cui quot sunt Corpore Plumæ,
Tot vigiles Oculi subter, (mirabile dictu,)
Tot Linguæ, totidem Ora sonant, tot surrigit Aures.
Nocte volat Cœli medio, Terræque per Umbram
Stridens, nec dulci declinat Lumina somno. ——
Luce sedet Custos, aut summi Culmine Tecti,
Turribus aut altis; aut magnas territat Urbes;
Tam ficti, pravique tenax, quam nuncia veri.
Hæc tum multiplici Populos Sermone replebat
Gaudens, et pariter facta atque infecta canebat.
——— *Vetis addere falsa*
Gaudet, et e minimo sua per Mendacia crescit.

Give Calumny a *Foundation* soever, and she will soon raise a Superstructure that will reach above the Clouds.

Common Fame is a Liar, and Truth seldom comes into her Mouth without some Addition or Diminution according to the Colours that Inclination or Interest gives it, taking some Tincture of the Passions she meets with by the Way.

how vaſt an Account the Injury he has done, may ſwell: nor how to make any valuable Satisfaction for it, if he ſhould. (*). He ought, indeed, (which yet Offenders in This Kind, are not moſt forward to do,) to make an ingenious Confeſſion of his Fault, by aſking Pardon, and ſetting thoſe to right whom he has miſled by his Evil Reports. — This is what all the Rules both of Reaſon and Religion, of common Honeſty and Ingenuity, require. (†)

But

(*) To rob a Man of his good Name is, by far, a more ſhocking Vice, than to rob him of a Sum of Money: for, he who does the latter, knows how much he has taken, and what Reſtitution to make; but it is impoſſible for him who does the former, to make an adequate Judgment, how much the injured Perſon has ſuffered, and what Reparation he ought to make: for he cannot tell what Advantages the Perſon might have received, if no diſadvantageous Impreſſions had been given of him.

The inſidious Slanderer is worſe
Than the poor Rogue who ſteals your Purſe:
Say, he purloins your glitt'ring Store;
Who takes your Gold, takes Traſh, - no more:
But the dark Villain, who muſt ruin
To blaſt a fair, and ſpotleſs Name,
May ſteal a precious Gem away,
Steal what both Indies can't repay.

Perfonæ Fama Pretium.

"A good Name is rather to be choſen than great Riches."

Iuvica Pallio proprior.

(†) All that we can reaſonably demand of fickle People, is, to

But This, (though it is all the Offender can do,) is yet far ſhort of a Compenſation for the Injury, which the Perſon abuſed may ſuſtain from it. For,

Conſidering the contageous Nature of it, who knows WHERE, or WHEN, or at WHAT Diſtance of Time it may break-out afreſh; — nor conſequently determine, with any Certainty, what Prejudice it may do the injured Party in all his juſt and honeſt Undertakings. (*)

To ſay nothing, therefore, of the Obligations of Chriſtian Charity, (the great Teſt of our holy Religion,) if we ſhould but conſider thoſe of Common Juſtice and Ingenuity, when we ſpeak of the Deſigns and Actions of others, it would be a moſt effectual Preſervative to us, (unleſs we are altogether inſenſible to the Impreſſions of Conſcience,) againſt this ſpreading and common Contagion.

At

gennouſly to acknowledge their Levity, and not to add Treachery to Inconſtancy. Whoever takes from his Neighbour his good Name, beſides the Sin he commits, is bound to make Reparation, tho different, according to the Diverſity of the Slanders; for no Man can enter Heaven with other Men's Goods, and amongſt all *exterior* Goods, that of a good Name is the moſt precious.

(*) There is no ſufficient Court of Judicature againſt the Venom

It is best, to it always Matter of Grief to the Perſon defamed; and Chriſtianity, (where otherwiſe no Good is to be expected,) requires us to be meek and gentle towards all Men, and inſtead of provoking one another to Anger by theſe Ways, that, contrarywiſe, we are to do it by all kind and gentle Perſuaſions to "Love and to good Works."

But further: — The Conſequences of this Vice are as bad, or worſe to Ourſelves.

Whoever is wont to ſpeak Evil of others, gives a bad Character of himſelf.

Thoſe who give themſelves the Liberty to reflect upon the Criminal Actions and Behaviour of Others, or to charge them perhaps with Crimes they never thought of, are frequently obſerved to ſpeak their own Inclinations; for "out of the Abundance of the Heart, the Mouth ſpeaketh." And, "as a Man ſpeaketh ſo is he;" (*) and, to give ſome viſible and

(*) Speech is generally deemed the trueſt Character of the Mind, and the ſureſt of inward Worth, or inward Evil, as diſcloſing the hidden Man of the Heart, opening the Cloſets of the Breaſt, bringing the dark Receſſes of the Soul into clear Light, rendering our Thoughts viſible, and our Intentions known.

Qualis cujuſque eſt Natura, talis eſt et Sermo.
Navita de Ventis, de Tauris narrat Arator;
Enumerat Miles Vulnera; Paſtor Oves.
Sors cuivis Homini, ſic Omnes Sorte loquuntur,
E recto rectus, e Corde Venena malo.

Serm. CXV. Men

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(*) There is no ſufficient Court of Judicature againſt the Venom of Slander; for tho' we may puniſh the Author, yet we cannot free ourſelves from the Calumny. Innocence is no Protection againſt Envy and Slander, for where Malice is rooted, accuſing is proving; what avails the Lamb to have the better Cauſe, if the Wolf has the ſtrongeſt Teeth; in this Caſe it is to no Purpoſe to ſtand reaſoning where the Adverſary is both Party and Judge.

Habit, it is always Matter of Grief to the Perſon concerned; and Chriſtianity, (where otherwiſe no Good is to be expected,) requires us to be meek and gentle towards all Men, and inſtead of provoking one another to Anger by theſe Ways, that, contrary-wiſe, we are to do it by all kind and gentle Perſuaſions to "Love and to good Works."

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Serm. CXV.

Men

and plain Hints what they themſelves would have been diſpoſed to do, under the ſame Circumſtances of Temptation. Hence it is that Scandal is never more induſtriouſly ſpread, or more artfully improved, than by Perſons of a defiled Imagination and corrupt Heart. They, who are ſenſible of their own Diſorders, and what Enormities they are apt to run into themſelves, calculate the Height of other People's Crimes from their own Aims; and thereby make a ſecret Confeſſion, what in a ſuppoſed Change of Perſons their own Inclinations would have led them to. "Thou thoughteſt (ſays the Pſalmiſt) that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf." (i.e) Thou haſt formed a Judgment of my Conduct, from the Natural Bent and Diſpoſition of thine own Heart.

Such are the Motives by which the Slanderer is commonly acted, and ſo difficult is it for him to diſſemble or conceal them.

Such Diſcourſe, as it is produced by bad Cauſes, ſo it proceeds from a corrupted Heart. "Doth the ſame Fountain (ſaith the Apoſtle) ſend forth SWEET Water

Men uſually frame both Opinions and Cenſures according to the Mould of Evil in themſelves. "An evil Man, out of the evil Treaſure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is evil." - *Sermo eſt Index Animi.* - A few Words, *caſually* offered, are more to be regarded, than thoſe *ſet, ſolemn* Speeches, which rather ſhow Men's *Arts*, than their *Natures*.

Matt. & Luke. "Wherefore by their Words ye shall know them," (*) a Disposition to Calumny is no bad thing, nor be the only thing in us that is bad: A Vice of this Distinction cannot be without large Retinues. All the Wise and Good, therefore, who hear us, will judge us accordingly (‡) and (which is a further Evil in the Case before us,) strongly suspect, that as we are capable of traducing Others to them, we may traduce them to others also, (†) and consequently guard against, and despise us as the common Nuisance and Pest of Society.

We are apt, perhaps, to imagine, that by perpetually praising Ourselves, and lessening another's Credit, we make our own Figures to appear the brighter by these Shades; & to recommend our own Conduct, by censuring that of our Neighbour's. (§)

But,

(*) *Facili credimus quæ volumus.*

To receive and entertain evil Reports, is a sure Sign of an evil Disposition: and shows at least, that we should be pleased if they were true.

(‡) There is scarce a Man living, who is not, in some Degree, guilty of this Offence; tho' at the same Time, however we treat One another, it must be confessed, that we all consent to speak ill of the Persons who are notorious in this Practice.

(†) "He that goeth about as a Tale-bearer, revealeth Secrets; therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his Lips."

(§) Having established in our own Thoughts a Kind of Competi-

But, We ought to consider, that the World hath equally an Eye upon our Conduct, and the same Right to make a Judgment of us as we have to sit upon the Actions of Others; and that it will judge of us, not from our declaiming against their Vices and Defects & the Elevation we would thereby give ourselves over them; but from our own personal

tion with those around us, and Rivalship for Respect and Credit, we are apt to flatter ourselves, that we are the better for their Shame, and the more respected when they are ill-thought of; we hope to appropriate to ourselves, the Honour which others lose, and inherit the Applauses they possess no longer. — But,

We are much mistaken in our Conclusions. For, not to urge the Danger of *Reprisals*, which may be made upon us with equal Success; and perhaps more Justice; This very Temper and Practice, if our Enemies have nothing more to alledge against us, is, of itself, one of the heaviest Imputations.

Eminent Merit can shine without a Foil; it needs no such Helps, and condescends not to make use of them; but is well-pleased with whatever is well-done, and is ready and delighted to do Justice to the Excellencies of Others. A Mind truly great, recommends and brings forward what is deserving of Encouragement; and, being rich in Praise, can bestow it liberally, without any Fear of Impoverishment.

They, therefore, who expose the Faults of Others, shew that they have either little considered their own, or else find them so great, that they are forced to the Art of Reversion, and seek in the Infamy of Others to drown their own.

Make not your Neighbour's Faults, then, greater than they are, nor your own less; for, to excuse your own is to double it; and to aggravate another's by Detraction, is to make it our own.

personal Qualifications and Behaviour. If they would but take sedate Reasons along with their Passion, they must conclude that they cannot monopolize the Privilege of Defamation; that the Airs they give themselves will be taken notice of, & the Liberties they use with other People's Characters, send in the World's Examination of their own.

The very Moment we attack the Reputation of another, we awaken and excite the Curiosity of those to whom we vilify him, to lay us in the Ballance, and to enquire, whether "we also are not Men of like Passions" ourselves, and by what indirect Views or Motives we are actuated. Upon

(*) However severe, and censorious we are, in the Errors of others, we carry a perverse foolish Fondness in our Bosoms, which will not let us discern half our own Imperfections; & those we do discern, it teaches us to connive at them.

Aliena vestitis perspicimus quàm nostra.

Aliena quisque Peccata videt, ut propria cavit.

Sibi quisque Adulator est.

Stultus et improbus hic Amor est, dignusque notari.
Cum tua pervideas Oculis Mala Lippus inunctis,
Cur in Amicorum Vitiis tam cernis acutum,
Quàm aut Aquila, aut Serpens Epidaurius? &c.
Non videmus id Manticæ quod in Tergo est.

Other People's Faults are before us; We cast our own behind us, and no Man sees the Load that hangs at his own Back.

Cum volumus deridere alios, decet in nos ipsos nos convertamus, nosque ipsos num et ipsi iisdem obnoxii simus. Multa enim Amor sui celat & tegit, etiam in his, qui maximè alios irrident.

Serm. CXV. perilous

Upon which Enquiries ſomething may be diſcovered, which we ſhould have found more advantageous in concealing. — At leaſt, Our defaming Others by Lies and Slanders may be the Occaſion of their ſpeaking the Truth by us; of their "reproving us, and ſetting before us the things which we have done;" and then perhaps we ſhall have no Occaſion to glorie. (*) — And,

The wiſe Authors of the Books of Wiſdom and Eccleſiaſticus expreſs themſelves clearly on this Head: "The Ear of Jealouſy heareth all things, and

Periculoſe maledicit alteri, cui vel idem, vel ſimile, vel diverſum, vel deterius Vitium poſſit objici; quod in Promptu ipſi vicißim objiciatur.

He who reprehends Others, ought to be of an unblameable Converſation himſelf. *Qui alterum incuſat Probri, eum ipſum ſe inſtrui oportet.* Let him that ſcoffeth at the Lame, take-care that he halt not himſelf. *Proprium eſt Stultitiæ aliorum Vitia cernere, et obliviſci ſuorum.*

Multa eſſe oportet in eo, qui alterum accuſet, primùm Integritatem atque Innocentiam. Nihil eſt enim quod minùs ferendum eſt, quàm Rationem ab altero Vitæ repetere eum, qui non poſſit ſuæ reddere.

(*) *Tuis te pinguem Coloribus.*
Dixerit inſanum qui me, totidem audiet, atque
Reſpicere ignoto diſcet pendentia Tergo.

Make not mighty Appearances, neither ſeem better, greater, or wiſer than ye really are, leſt ye be examined, and ſtripped, & rendered leſs than ye ſhould be. — *Ut Jaculum, ſi in ſolidum aliquid incidarit, nunquam in Mittentem retorquitur: Ità, Convitium in ſortem et conſtantem Virum tortum, recedit in Convitium facientem.* — Calumny! If thou art a Mud-Wall, it will ſtick; if Marble, it will rebound.

and the Noise of Whisperings is not hid: therefore refrain your Tongue from Backbiting, for there is no Word so secret that shall go for nought, and the Mouth that belyeth slayeth the Soul." "He that can rule his Tongue shall live without Strife; and he that useth Babbling shall have less Evil:" "Rehearse not unto another that which is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse:" "Whether it be to a Friend or a Foe, talk not of other Men's Lives; and if thou canst without Offence, reveal them not: for he heard and observed thee, and when Time cometh he will hate thee:" "If thou hast heard a Word, let it die with thee, and behold, it will not burst thee."

It is well worthy Consideration what our Saviour says in this very Case, that "with what Measure we mete to others, it shall be measured to us again;" and that too many Times "heaped-up and running over:" for, there is hardly any thing wherein Mankind are more strict Justice and Equality, than in "rendering Evil for Evil, and Railing for Railing." (*) God

(*) Who deals in Slander, deals in Strife.

Think then, ere you stretch your Lungs,
That all your Neighbours too have Tongues;
One Slander must ten thousand get,
The World with Interest pays the Debt.

God forbid, I should be thought to speak this with any Intention to justify such Retaliations or reciprocal Invectives — but only that all Men have not that Command of their Temper, as to be silent under Provocations of this Kind.

" Whatever bright Ideas we may have of Religion, and the Duties of Christian Meekness in particular, yet, it is too visible, that Christians do not always govern their Practice by Principle, and that where they do not, Nature, (depraved Nature,) will have its Course — What affects us in our nearest and dearest Interests is not easily digested; and it is hard to persuade Men in such Cases, that Patience and Submission are Duties really incumbent on them. Contrariwise, there is no Provocation at which our Hearts arise sooner, or more violently prompt us to a Revenge. So that the Slanderer does not always consult his own Reputation or Ease, but exposes himself to a Resentment, which, at one Time or other, the slandered Party may be in a Condition to turn upon him, both to his Disgrace and Disquiet.

But, — Revenge often goes further than Words: A reproachful & slanderous Man is often embroiled in Bloodshed and Murder; and, tho' neither of these great Mischiefs should happen to us, yet, This may be inconvenient enough to us many other Ways.

No

No Man knows in the various Changes of things and Mutability of human Affairs, whose Kindness and Good-will he may hereafter stand in need of; and, if such should be, how incapable will this Carriage render us of it! — Indeed, if our Enemy should be incapable of Forgiveness, give him an Opportunity to revenge a spiteful and needless Word by a shrewd Turn.

So that, did a Man only consult his own Safety and Quiet, he ought to refrain from Evil-speaking.

"What Man is he, then, that loveth Life, and fain would see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile; let him seek Peace and pursue it."

Solomon also, who has laid down so many excellent Rules & Instructions for the Conduct of human Life, is very copious on this Head;

"A Fool's Lips, (saith he,) entereth into Contention, and his Mouth calleth for Strokes." "A Fool's Mouth is his Destruction, and his Lips are the Snare of his Soul;" Again "Whoso keepeth his Mouth and his Tongue, keepeth his Soul from Trouble." Numberless are the Expressions to this Purpose! — But,

Why need I multiply Authorities to confirm what is so very obvious, and what almost every Per-

ſon can arreſt from his own Experience.

It is the expreſs Command of God himſelf, "Thou ſhalt not raiſe a falſe Report."

"Thou ſhalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People." (*)

"Let all Bitterneſs, therefore, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-ſpeaking, be put away from you, with all Malice." — But further:

There is an infinitely greater Danger ſtill, [viz] if we allow ourſelves in this Evil Practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. James expreſſly tells us - "If any Man among you ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, that Man's Religion is vain;" Whereas, "if any Man offend not in Word, the ſame is a perfect Man, and able alſo to bridle the whole Body." (‡) Conſider

(*) "Where no Wood is, there the Fire goeth out: ſo, where there is no Tale-bearer, the Strife ceaſeth."

(‡) That the Uſe of ſpeech hath an Influence on all our Actions, may be inferred from hence; that whoever governs it prudently, does alſo, for the generality, wiſely order his whole Life. Speech is, indeed, the Rudder that ſteers human Affairs, the Spring that puts in Motion the Wheel of Action - the Hands, the Feet - all the Members, and Senſes act by its Direction and Impulſe. Our moſt conſiderable Affairs are managed and conducted merely by Words - by them Princes rule their Subjects, Generals command their Armies, Senators

Consider how the Company, the Holy Ghost vi-
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ally

Senators deliberate & debate about the grand Affairs of State, - by their Advocates plead Causes, and Judges decide them - by their Ministers perform their Offices, and administer their Functions, in a Word, whatever is done in the Court or Camp, in Church or State, at Home or Abroad, is performed solely by the Tongue. The whole Business of Conversation, of Commerce, of Administration of Justice, of Learning and Religion is hereby managed. Indeed, Our very Recreations and Diversions, which fill up the Spaces of Time, and the little Intervals of Business, chiefly consist in the Use of Speech. The Benefit of which is so extensive and universal, being immediately the Instrument, by consequence, the Source of all our Actions, that he who governs it with Wisdom and Prudence, must justly be esteemed to live excellently well. Indeed,

To govern the Tongue rightly, is exceeding difficult, requiring not only great Goodness, Judgment and Art, but much Vigilance and Circumspection, the doing of which is an Instance of great Virtue.

For, — Since the Tongue is a loose and pliant Engine, which the least Breath of Thought stirs and moves any Way, it cannot but demand much Attention to keep it at Rest, or a right Motion. And since numberless things are roving in the Fancy, and from thence incessantly obtruding themselves upon the Tongue, much Application of Mind and great Judgment are requisite to select what are good, and to reject all that is bad and improper to be spoken.

Since Temptations continually occur, provoking or alluring us to offend herein, every Object we behold, Company we are engaged in, and Accident that befalls us, do continually suggest somewhat tending hereto. The Condition of our Neighbour, if high, moving us to flatter, if low, to insult. Our own Fortune, if prosperous, elating, if adverse, dejecting us; any Action exciting fond Admiration, or pleasing; harsh Censure, if disagreeable.

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Since then we are thus liable to speak ill, it requires the utmost Skill and Caution, great Industry and Resolution, to manage it with Prudence and Discretion: And he must be both wise, most certainly be a very good Man, Because, there are more Opportunities of Privacy, and fewer Restraints attending irregular Speech, than on any bad Action. A Man can speak ill with less inward Regret and Dissatisfaction, and with less outward Hazard, than he can act ill.

Bad Actions require Time to observe and consider, as well as to perform them; but ill Words are subtile and transient, often uttered rashly without Thought before, or Reflection afterwards. Bad Actions have usually visible Effects immediately consequent on them; but Words operate insensibly, and at a Distance. There are also frequent Occasions of speaking ill on Presumption of Secrecy, which is often entertained with Complacency and Applause.

The vile Abuses of Speech, such as Blasphemy, Treason, and Slander, may be safely whisper'd into Ears, which will receive them with Pleasure and Commendation. And, (what is more,) in most Cases, bad Language is neither strictly prohibited, nor severely punished by human Laws, as is an evil Action: by which Means the Guilt of this Sin seems little or none; and Persons, who practice it, do often pass for innocent, in the Opinion of themselves and others. Men generally think their Tongue is free, and that many Words may be dispensed with. — So that,

Considering how many Encouragements there are to offend with the Tongue, and how few Restraints we have to deter us from it; we may safely conclude, that he who carefully governs his Tongue, according to the Rules of Duty and Reason, may justly be reputed to be very good. — And, As most of the Enormities, Miseries & Troubles whereby the Souls of Men are defiled, the Minds discomposed, and their Lives disquieted, are the Effects of ill-governed Speech; That being what chiefly perverts Justice, sows Dissensions, raises Passions and Animosities

Catalogue of Sins in the Bible, but we find This among them: "Out of the Heart, (says our Saviour,) proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, False witness, Evil speaking." The Apostle ranks Backbiters with the blackest Crimes of those "who are given up to a reprobate Mind;" and which, in the Judgment of God, "are worthy of Death:" He puts Slanderers & Revilers among those that "shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." "Who, says the Psalmist, shall ascend into the Holy Hill of the Lord? Even he that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart; (after having charged them not to backbite, &c.) he shall receive the Blessing from the Lord, and Righteousness from the God of his Salvation." Such a Man is a Friend to Mankind, and a Benefactor to Society: He is a Friend to Peace, and Enemy to Contention: He is a Friend to Truth, and Enemy to Falsehood: He is a Friend to Love, and Enemy to Hatred: He is a Friend to Concord, and Enemy to Discord: He is a Friend to Unity, and Enemy to Divisions: He is a Friend to Order, and Enemy to Confusion: He is a Friend to Quietness, and Enemy to Disturbance: He is a Friend to Modesty, and Enemy to Impudence: He is a Friend to Humility, and Enemy to Pride: He is a Friend to Meekness, and Enemy to Passion: He is a Friend to Charity, and Enemy to Malice: He is a Friend to Mercy, and Enemy to Cruelty: He is a Friend to Piety, and Enemy to Impiety: He is a Friend to Virtue, and Enemy to Vice: He is a Friend to Heaven, and Enemy to Hell: He is a Friend to God, and Enemy to the Devil. Such a Man is a Friend to Mankind, and a Benefactor to Society: He is a Friend to Peace, and Enemy to Contention: He is a Friend to Truth, and Enemy to Falsehood: He is a Friend to Love, and Enemy to Hatred: He is a Friend to Concord, and Enemy to Discord: He is a Friend to Unity, and Enemy to Divisions: He is a Friend to Order, and Enemy to Confusion: He is a Friend to Quietness, and Enemy to Disturbance: He is a Friend to Modesty, and Enemy to Impudence: He is a Friend to Humility, and Enemy to Pride: He is a Friend to Meekness, and Enemy to Passion: He is a Friend to Charity, and Enemy to Malice: He is a Friend to Mercy, and Enemy to Cruelty: He is a Friend to Piety, and Enemy to Impiety: He is a Friend to Virtue, and Enemy to Vice: He is a Friend to Heaven, and Enemy to Hell: He is a Friend to God, and Enemy to the Devil.

Authorities, embroiles the World with Factions and Seditions, makes Men hate and strive, deceive and suffer, defame and disgrace one another: - whereby innumerable Vexations and Disturbances arise among Men: - He, therefore, that so well governs his Speech, as to preserve himself from the Guilt and Inconveniences of all such Evils, may reasonably be esteemed a very wise and happy, a very good and worthy Man.

A Tongue, so prudently managed, cannot fail of producing much Honour to God, with great Benefit to ourselves and others. Such Discourse will be sweet and pleasant, full and useful, tending to edify Conversation, to content good Humour, to promote Love, to instruct and edify, chear and comfort one another. Such "a Tongue is Health - his Mouth is a Well, and a Tree of Life - his Lips disperse Knowledge, and - Others shall be fatisfied with Good, by the Fruit of his Mouth." - These are the Effects of innocent, sober, and prudent Discourse, of "one who doth not offend with the Tongue;" and, where found, are a high Commendation of the excellent Virtue of the Person - And, the Rarity of the Practice is a considerable Argument in favour of the Excellency and Worth of the Virtue.

the Hill of the Lord, and dwell in the Tabernacle of the Most High?" To which the Answer is, "He that hath not ſlandered his Neighbour."

Again, When ſpeaking of the dire Effects of this Sin, he hath theſe Words; "What Reward ſhall be given, or done unto thee, thou falſe Tongue? Even mighty & ſharp Arrows, with hot burning Coals." Reciprocal Slander and Reproach (*) will attend it here, and its End will be miſerable hereafter.

To which I ſhall add, &c. (under) —

Epheſians, (after having charged them not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God,) proceeds to enumerate ſome of thoſe Sins, whereby the Holy-Ghoſt is moſt apt to be grieved & to with-draw the Influences of his Holy Spirit from us. Among theſe he particularly mentions Evil-ſpeaking: and by reſerving it for the LAST Place in the Gradation, ſeems to ſet a Mark of Diſtinction upon it. "Let all Bitterneſs, (ſays he,) and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-ſpeaking, be put-away from you."

The Scope of his Argument is to ſhew us, that we cannot be ſuppoſed to have any vital Communion with the Spirit of God, while we allow ourſelves in a Practice ſo injurious and provoking to him; and indeed, ſo contrary to all the Sentiments of univerſal

(*) That theſe Words of the Pſalmiſt are to be underſtood in this Senſe, is evident from ſimilar Expreſſions, [viz] "They ſhoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words." "Their Words are Speare and Arrows, and their Tongue a ſharp Sword."

wellish Love & Good-will towards Mankind which is the Blessed Office to fill our Hearts with.

I shall mention but one Passage more from St. Peter, where we are exhorted to lay aside all Malice, and all Guile, & Hypocrisies, & Envies & Evil speaking. Here again we find Evil-speaking numbered among those Vices which are most opposite to the Graces of the Christian Life, and put at the End of the Account, as if all the Rest were included in it.

"Speak not Evil, therefore, one of another, Brethren, for he that speaketh Evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, speaketh Evil of the Law" (i.e.) of the great Law of Christian Charity, which runs (as it were) like a golden Vein through the Writings of our Lord & his Apostles, and ought to be the Rule of all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions in Relation to the Duties we owe to one another. It is contrary to that wise Dictate of Nature, of Doing to others as we would they should do to me; and is a sure Sign of a weak Mind, which is not able to bear the Lustre of Merit and Virtue.

It is contrary to the right Use of Speech, which was given us, not that we might be hurtful and Injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another.

The Tongue, when rightly employed, is certainly

To which I shall add the Counsel of the wise Man: "Refrain thy Tongue from Backbiting, for there is no Word so secret that shall go for nought, and the Mouth that slandereth slayeth the Soul."

No Wonder, then, that in all the Apostolical Writings, we are so earnestly cautioned against so dangerous a Sin. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, (after having charged them not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God,) proceeds to enumerate some of those Sins, whereby the Holy Ghost is most apt to be grieved & to with-draw the Influences of his Holy Spirit from us. Among these he particularly mentions Evil-speaking: and by reserving it for the LAST Place in the Gradation, seems to set a Mark of Distinction upon it. "Let all Bitterness, (says he,) and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from you."

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(*) That these Words of the Psalmist are to be understood in this Sense, is evident from similar Expressions, [viz] "They shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words." "Their Words are Spears and Arrows, and their Tongue a sharp Sword."

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It is contrary to the right Use of Speech, which was given us, not that we might be hurtful and Injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The Tongue, when rightly employed, is certainly

the best Men have hated," "therewith praise we God, and bless Men;" let not such, become an Instrument of Blasphemy, of Detraction, or Slander to either; for, when exercised in any of these Ways, it is certainly "an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poison!"

Many value Reputation more than Life, which without Reputation is but a Burden. The Tongue therefore, that wounds That, may be a sharper Sword, than any other, which can only hurt the Body. He whose "Teeth are Spears and Arrows," only pierce deeper to the Heart, than if he, in a literal Sense, employed those Weapons against his Adversary. (*)—But further,

This Vice is purely diabolical. And Oh! That Men would seriously consider This, that when they are handing about a Lye, a false & evil Slander, to the Hurt of their Christian Brethren, they are doing the Work of the great Accuser of Mankind; and are complying with the Suggestions of "the Wicked One, who till works in the Children of Disobedience", and are doing that which renders them at once both hateful to God and Man, and indicates them to be the Children of the Devil. Let

(*) *Gladius fuisse Corpus vulnerat, Mentem non ferus.*
Lingua mala acutior Cuspide Gladii.
See Note (*) page 197. And (*) page 232.

"We should therefore weigh our Words in a Balance, and make a Door and Bar for the Mouth."

Let us, then, upon all Provocations, upon all Temptations of Vanity, of Affectation of Wit, or a ſecret Depravity of Temper, that may incline us to ſpeak evil of other Men, take-heed to our own Ways.

Let us recollect ourſelves, and conſider the many ill, and perhaps irreparable Effects of Detraction, that "we offend not with the Tongue."

"Let us not talk of other Men's Lives: - If we have heard a Word, let it die with us, and be bold, it will not burſt us:" - and pray, with the holy Pſalmiſt, that God would, on ſuch Occaſions, "ſet a Watch before our Mouth, and keep the Door of our Lips."

Sermon

SERMON CXVI.

On the same Subject.

Titus iii. 2. "Speak evil of no Man."

As there is nothing more ingenious than an evil Diſpoſition, to excuſe what it has a Mind to perform; So here, notwithſtanding the odious Nature of the Sin of Evil-ſpeaking, and the many ſtrong Arguments againſt it, yet we find it not without its Excuſe with the perverſe and diſobedient. — But,

If it be alledged, (as is generally the Caſe,) that they do it to DISCOURAGE Vice, it is but too plain, that the COMMON Way they take hereto, is a full Confutation of their Argument. — For,

If the real Reformation of our Brother was the only avowed Object before us, we ſhould take a different Method, and not publickly expoſe his Faults, which will probably harden him in his Sin; for, when a Sinner finds his Crimes are become public, he, but too commonly, goes on "with an high Hand," in bold Defiance, as knowing, that when his

his Character is once publickly branded, his former good Name is almost irrecoverable, and Repentance, should it ensue, will scarce be credited.

If, therefore, This were our Object, [viz.] the Reformation of Mankind, we should, if we steadily consulted it, all it is to our Brother's Fault in Meekness; or, at most, "if he should not hear us in the Presence of two or three" who may second our good Reasons of Persuasion, and bind him down more strongly to a better Conduct (a) or thereby convincing him, that what makes us desirous of his Sin, is mere Charity to his Soul.

The very Means, therefore, which we take are destructive of the End we pretend to aim at, and shew plainly, that we are actuated by other Motives than those of mere Charity to the Souls of Men, and the Good of our Fellow-creatures. But,

Were This really the Case, yet we have not to punish one Fault in our Brother, by being guilty of another Ourselves. (‡) Indeed, whatever Excuses we

(a) In all these Cases, it would be a much more commendable Piece of Wisdom, if, instead of Calumniating the Faults of Others, we took occasion to correct in Ourselves whatever was amiss.

Optimum est aliena vitia Insania.

Felix quem faciunt aliena Pericula cautum.

By Others Faults, wise Men correct their own.

we make, as often as we indulge Ourselves in this Vice, of dwelling on the Faults & Follies of others, we may take it for granted, that we are all the while secretly soothing the Pride and Vanity of our own Minds: (*) Whenever, therefore, we find ourselves tempted to despise any one, we should humble ourselves with this Question of St. Paul — "who maketh thee to differ from another; and, what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" If we have the Happiness to be more prudent in our Conduct, or engaging in our Conversation than another, Let us give God the Glory, and be assured, that we are none of us without our Failings, and may all find Employment enough at Home in correcting our own Irregularities, which will turn to much better Account, than sitting in Judgement upon our Neighbours.

We are not to be ignorant, that God hath expressly commanded us not to judge, lest we also be judged; & that it is [illegible] in His Eyes to condemn Others (†) Indeed, whatever Excuses we

(*) Speaking, or intimating things to another's Disadvantage, tho they be true, is seldom innocent. For, it usually proceeds from bad Principles: Revenge, Envy, Malice, Pride, Censoriousness, unfair Zeal for some private or party Interest; or at least, from Desire of appearing to know more than others, or mere impertinent Fondness of Talking. But, these are wretched Motives of publishing what is hurtful to our Brethren. — Making them designedly, without Cause, is inexcusable Wickedness; and even where we intend no Harm, we may do a great deal.

mit Faults which we repent of, than to accuse our Brethren rashly.

The more the Lord has preserved us from Excesses, which require Repentance, the more compassionate ought we to be to those who give way to them; (*) as our Exemption is the pure Effect of his Mercy, and for which we should ascribe no Merit to ourselves. — In a Word,

There will be always bad Men enough to reproach the Evil for their Doings; and there is no need at all that good Men should be concerned in the odious Work. — It is not the Property of Charity, or of a charitable Man, to rejoice in Iniquity. "Let the Dead bury their Dead:" let those that are Dead to all Sentiments of Virtue, throw Dirt upon Men in the same State with themselves.

Let no Man, therefore, presume upon Impunity, on the one Hand, nor despair on the other, for, this Business will be sufficiently done. (‡) — Indeed,

We may safely trust an ill-natured World, that there will, by no Means, be any Failure of Justice in

(*) *Quantum a Rerum Turpitudine abes, tantum te a Verborum Libertate cohibeto.* We should be as careful of our Words, as of our Actions, and as far from speaking, as doing ill. See No. 427. of the Spectator.

(‡) *Calumniatores fugiat Potius quam sequatur.*

in this Kind. (*) — The Passions of Men are pretty severe Executioners: To them, therefore, let us leave this ungrateful Task, and rather ourselves endeavour to cultivate that more friendly One, recommended by the Apostle, of "letting all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Clamor, and Evil-speaking, be put away from us, with all Malice; & of being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's Sake, hath forgiven us!"

There is a far more effectual Way of discountenancing Wickedness, than by publickly traducing it in particular Persons: every Act of a good Life (†) fairly puts it out of Countenance, as it justly esteems it, as it really is, its greatest Reproach.

A good Man, then, need not go out of his common Tract to rebuke Vice particularly; Indeed, the more steadily he perseveres in his Integrity, the more

(*) *Par pari refertur. — Pœr cittis defertis quàm Nemina.*

See Note (S) Page 44.

"He, then, that keepeth his Mouth, keepeth his Life; but he that openeth wide his Lips, shall have Trouble."

(†) Praise no Man too liberally when he is present, nor censure him too lavishly when he is absent; the One favours of Flattery, the Other of Malice; and Both are reprehensible. — The true Way to advance another's Virtue, is to *follow* it; and, the best Way to decry another's Vice, is to *decline* it.

more genial and effectual Good does he herein.

Whereby they who rebuke and revile, and do the same things, do but, (as the Apostle expresseth it,) speak into the Air. Their Reproach is unavailing, and returns empty into their Bosoms; or, rather worse, as it is prejudging themselves, who are equally guilty of many Sins.

"Why, (says our Blessed Saviour,) beholdest thou the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye, and perceivest not the Beam that is in thine Eye? Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the Beam that is in thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the Mote that is in thy Brother's Eye."

With Regard to Men's natural Infirmities, and lower Qualifications, which take up so great a Share of the Detractor's Conversation, (*) when we read that

(*) *Major vis Ridiculi in Vitiis, quàm Laudibus est.*

The Province of Ridicule is very narrow. Vice is the Object of our Hatred; natural Folly, of our Pity; acquired, or affected Folly is the only Object of Ridicule; when not content with what we really are, are ambitious of being thought what we are not, or aspire at what we cannot be.

Mocking is of all Injuries the least pardonable. It is the Language of Contempt, and the surest Way by which it makes itself understood. It attacks a Man in his innermost Intrenchments, the good Opinion he has of himself; it aims at making him ridiculous in his own Eyes, and by thus convincing him that the Person who derides him, cannot have a worse Disposition towards him, renders him irreconciliable.

Serm. CXVI. It

that Man was created in the Image of God, what can we infer from hence, but that to be vile, or speak evil of any Man, on this Account, must involve in it some Degree of Contempt of That Being whose Image he bears. (*) — Indeed, When

It is, of all things, most inexplicable, for as much as no Man can think himself so vile, that he ought to be despised. We should be out of Humour with Ourselves, if we thought ourselves insignificant, and of no Consequence: and, can it be wondered at, that we are out of Humour with Others, when they give us to understand by their Behaviour, that we appear such to them. Men had rather be thought vitious than ridiculous. They can bear to be hated for their Vices, but cannot endure to be ridiculed for their Follies.

Never deride a Person, then, in his Infirmities, but bless God that you have no Occasion to grieve for them in yourself.

Be not diverted with the Folly of an Idiot, the Fancy of a Lunatick, or the Frenzy of a Drunkard: make such the Object of your Pity, not your Pastime. It is a Degree of Folly to delight to see it in Others; and the greatest Insolence imaginable, to rejoice at the Disgrace of human Nature.

(*) "'Tis true, my Shape is something odd;
"But, blaming me, is blaming God.
"For, had I spoke myself to Birth,
"I'd please the nicest Judge on Earth.
"Or, could I form myself anew,
"I would not fail of pleasing You.
"Your Charms have long been dear to Fame,
"And half the Country fought your Name;
"But who that dimply Chin supply'd?
"And bade those Cheeks their rosy Pride?
"Had You yourself thus beauteous made,
"To Thee the Praise were justly paid;
"Your

When Reflection informs us, that every good Christian is "the Temple of the Holy Ghost;" and that Man's various Endowments are the Gifts of that "one self-same Spirit, who divideth to every Man severally as he will;" — The lowest Abilities, in this View, appear by no Means proper Objects of Censure or Reproach.

"He that, (on this Account,) despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit." — And

To every such vain Boaster we may, with great Propriety, address the Apostle's Exhortation;

"Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" (*)

Instead, therefore, of glorying in our several Receipts,

"Your Pride might then have Room to swell;
"Thy Motto *this*, - "I've made me well."
"But since the Power that finish'd thee,
"Who might have touch'd my Struggling Thine,
"And gave thee One, determin'd Misshape,
"For what thou art, that Power adore,
"And laugh at my odd Shape no more."

To find fault with, or despise any Person merely on Account of some external Deformity of Shape or Face, is not only cruel, but would not be avoided, but sinful, as it is intending or despising that, which the All-wise God has seen fit to permit, or appointed to take place; for, "God (we know) is UNIVERSAL CAUSE."

(*) See Note (*) Page 245.

reigns, or letting at nought our Brother, because we suppose him to have received less; it would become us rather to improve, with Thankfulness, the several Talents committed to our Trust, lest they should be taken from us and given to others, who would bring forth their Fruit in due Season.

Especially, (according to that just Argument of our Saviour,) The more is given to us, the more again will be required from us.

As to the Calamities of Men, when we see God's Hand heavy upon others, (whether in Poverty, Sickness, or Distress,) it is no Part of our Business to judge them, but ourselves; (*) & by Repentance to prevent what our own Sins have deserved. (†) To

(*) *Non est Iræ Jovis Indicium Arcus cælestis. Morbus Regius, etiam non vocatus, venit.*

(†) *Neminem Dolebit*

The Unfortunate are insulted by every Rascal; (See the first Line in Note, (*) Page 265) and none but fools will sport with another's Infirmities: the Practice is inhuman. *Ne insultes Miseris.* - Deride not Infirmities, nor triumph over Injuries: "Laugh no Man to Scorn in the Bitterness of his Soul for there is One that numbereth & exalteth."

To bear with the Imperfections of our Neighbours, is a Debt, and one of the chief Points of Love we owe to him. Whoso mocketh at the Poor, reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at Calamities, shall not be unpunished."

How Condition exposeth the wisest of Men to Contempt: while

(*) See Note (*) Page 265. Serm. CXVI.

Therefore hard-hearted are they that are in Affliction, as they are truly taken notice of by the Psalmist, as the Height of Wickedness: "They persecute them whom Thou hast smitten, and talk to the Grief of those whom Thou hast wounded."

God, for wise, just, and good Reasons, correcteth the Children of Men when and how he sees proper: and therefore, we ought not to judge what are his Motives for so doing, but search out our own Hearts, and repent, lest our Sins may deserve the like Punishment. We should well consider how our Saviour reproves such evil Practices: "Suppose ye, (says he, to the censorious Jews,) that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

In all the Miseries of others, Compassion becomes a Debt to them. How unjust, then, are they, who, instead of paying them that Debt, "add Wormwood to their Bitterness," and afflict them with Scorn and Reproach!

Insult not Misery, therefore, neither deride Infirmity

we can keep our Poverty a Secret, we can never feel the Weight of it. There is nothing in a mean Estate so intollerable, as the Ridiculousness of it; for Patience is not so much hurt by Pain and Loss, as by Derision and Calumny. - *Nil tristius quam illudi.*

mity; non ridicule Deformity: The first shews Inhumanity; the second Folly; and the third Pride.

He that made him miserable, made thee happy to lament him; (*)

He that made him weak, made thee strong to support him; (‡)

He that made him deformed, if He hath made thee otherwise, shew not thy Ingratitude to thy great Creator, by despising any of his Creatures; well-knowing, that at the Great Day, (after the Resurrection,) he, who in this Life hath behaved himself most wisely, will then have the most beautiful and glorified Body, & will shine so forever and ever. (†)

An Evil-speaking, then, is of such dire Consequences to the Fate of Mankind, it highly becomes all true Lovers of Peace, neither to allow it in themselves,

(*) "Weep with those that weep." "Comfort the feeble-minded."

(‡) "Bear one another's Burdens." "Support the weak."

(†) It proceeds from the Height of Incivility and a fordid Education, to ridicule any One for their natural Infirmities or Imperfections. No Reproaches vex People more, than they, who have the true Taste for Conversation, enjoy themselves in a Communion of each other's Excellencies, and not in a Triumph over their Imperfections. There are some Tempers so sweet and obliging, that they take Pleasure in observing the Virtues and Perfections of others; so that, in Return, whatever Faults they have of their own, are overlooked and concealed, out of common Gratitude, by all their Acquaintance.

selves, nor to countenance or encourage it in others, but to shew their Dislike and Detestation of it upon all Occasions, as the great Bane and Pest of Society: (*) And, This may be easily done; for, Slanderers and Evil-speakers flourish and play only in the Sun-shine, (as) where they meet with a kind and favourable Reception: Disapprove of their Ways, and they are gone: According to the Saying of Solomon, "As the North-wind driveth away Rain, so doth an angry Countenance a back-biting Tongue." Indeed, we ought, so far from countenancing Scandal and Detraction, to express, in all proper Ways, our Dislike of it: and shew the Uncertainty, the Improbability, and Falsehood, if we can, of injurious Rumours; oppose the divulging even of Truths that are uncharitable; and set a Pattern of giving every one his just Praise.

If the Matter is too evident to be denied, we may

(*) Next to the Raisers and Spreaders of evil Reports, they who encourage Persons of That Kind, by hearkening to them with Pleasure, and by Readiness of Belief in what they say, are accessary with them.

Absentem qui rodit Amicum;
Qui non defendit alio culpante; solutos
Qui captat Risus Hominum; Famamque Dicacis;
Fingere qui non visa potest; commissa tacere
Qui nequit: Hic niger est, hunc tu, Romane, caveto.
Hor. Sat. [illegible]

may endeavour to diminish the Guilt of it, by imputing it to Ignorance or Surprize, or to the Strength of Temptation; and by owning that the best People might have found Difficulties in such dangerous Circumstances & Temptations. A good Man openeth not his Ear unto Slander; the Faults and the Failings of Men give Pain to his Heart.

It would be a great Preservative against this Practice if Men would consider how they are apt to be affected themselves, when This becomes their Case.

As bad as they are, are they not fond of the Praise of Men, and the Concealment of all their Faults and Defects? (*)

Nothing then, surely, is more equal, or reasonable, than that well-known Rule "of doing to Others, as we would have them do unto us. (†)

Another Means whereby to prevent this Evil-speaking, would be, to mind ourselves and our own Concerns; for, "Idleness is the Root of all Evil." — Above all, The

(*) Whatever we ourselves are subject to, should never be the Subject of our Derision in another! So that the very Sins of our Neighbour are no just Excuse for our Contempt and Scorn; but instead of Reproach, they should excite our Compassion.

(†) We all think it an Injury, in the tenderest Part, when bad Impressions are made on Others concerning us, and therefore should conscientiously avoid doing the same Injury to others.

The Injury here by done to the Perſon defamed ſhould, in a moſt ſpecial Manner, keep us from it. It is a very certain & evident Truth, that according to the Value, or Worth of any thing, wherein we invade another Man's Right, the Wrong we do him is proportionably heightened: — It is no leſs certain, that of all the external Advantages & Comforts of human Life, there are none more valuable or of greater Importance to a Man, eſpecially to thoſe of Birth, Fortune, or Education, or whoſe Office or Employment, ſets them eminently in the World, than a Good-name (*) It is above the Price of the

(*) As Love of Reputation is a darling Paſſion of great Men, ſo the Defence of it, in this Particular, is the Bulneſs of every Man of Honour and Honeſty. We are obliged, by a Principle of Self-Defence, to ſet a Mark of Infamy on thoſe who have injuriouſly branded the Reputation of their Neighbours. For he who has injured one Perſon in his Reputation or Fortune, threatens every Body; we ſhould run on ſuch an Occaſion, as to an increaſing Conflagration, &c. (under) gainſt all Invaders; and every Man is attacked in the Perſon of that Neighbour who deſerves well of him, and he ſcarcely deſerves the Name of a Man, who can ſilently bear it.

Reputation, of all Poſſeſſions, is the moſt valuable, next to a *good Conſcience*; to which indeed it of Right belongs, and from which it naturally ſprings. The *Rear* lies out of the Reach of Injury: Your Innocence, by God's Grace, no Man can take from you, without your own Conſent; but the Fruit of a *fair Reputation*, ſo beautiful, and fragrant, and in all Reſpects ſo precious, This, alas! hangs expoſed to the Aſſault of every Paſſenger. The loweſt amongſt us can caſt a

may endeavour to diminish the Guilt of it, by imputing it to Ignorance or Surprize, or to the Strength of Temptation; and by owning that the best People might have found Difficulties in such dangerous Circumstances & Temptations. A good Man openeth not his Ear unto Slander; the Faults and the Failings of Men give Pain to his Heart.

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The Injury here by done to the Person defamed should in a most especial Manner keep us from it. It is a very certain & evident Truth, that according to the Value, or Worth of any thing, wherein we invade another Man's Right, the Wrong we do him is proportionably heightened: — It is no less certain, that of all the external Advantages & Comforts of human Life, there are none more valuable or of greater Importance to a Man, especially to those of Birth, Fortune, or Education, or whose Office or Employment, sets them eminently in the World, than a Good name (*) It is above the Price of

(*) See Note (*)

the

creating Conflagration, to suppress it; and all who spread, or publish any detestible Peices as traduce real Merit, should be used as Incendaries. It is the common Cause of our Country to support the Reputation of those who deserve well by their Actions, and to preserve it against all Invaders; and every Man is attacked in the Person of that Neighbour who deserves well of him, and he scarcely deserves the Name of a Man, who can silently bear it.

Reputation, of all Possessions, is the most valuable, next to a *good Conscience*; to which indeed it of Right belongs, and from which it naturally springs. The *Rose* lies out of the Reach of Injury: Your Innocence, by God's Grace, no Man can take from you, without your own Consent; but the Fruit of *a fair Reputation*, so beautiful, and fragrant, and in all Respects so precious, This, alas! hangs exposed to the Assault of every Passenger. The lowest amongst us can cast a

the "Gold of Ophir;" (*) and therefore, not wantonly to be tossed about, as of Men only in Sport: "It is better than precious Ointment;" and, in many Cases than even Life itself.

The laudable Ambition of being well thought and spoken of, discovers itself in Persons of all Ranks and Distinctions. (‡) — Indeed,

The Desire which People, (even the very meanest of us,) ordinarily discover to preserve a fair Reputation in the World, is very reasonable, and serves almost to every good and useful Purpose: for, so much of Reputation, is always so much Power.

In Proportion to Men's Credit, Esteem, and Character, in the World, their Weight, Influence, and Power to do themselves and others Good will be greater and more extensive. It enlarges our Capacity of doing good both in publick and private; It enforces and adds Weight to our Council and Advice

Stone upwards, and laugh to see the Prize fall, tho he cannot gather it. He who deprives us of This, robs us of that which enriches not him, but leaves us poor indeed.

(*) See Note (*) Page 239.

(‡) See Note (‡) Page 233. — There are none that contemn a bad Fame, so much, as those who despise the Virtues that produce a good One; they that slight Reputation, seldom value Virtue; for when once they are indifferent to Other's Words, they are commonly so to their own Actions; such we should avoid. How can we expect they will preserve our Reputation, when they are regardless of their own?

vice. It gives us a more ready and free Access in our Applications, and facilitates the Execution of all our Designs; - In a Word, In all the Ways of Commerce and Dealing in the World, it is of unspeakable Use and Importance to us. (*)

It were endless to enumerate all the Advantages of a good Reputation, and to shew that there is scarce any Action of our Lives, how commendable soever in itself, to which a good Reputation does not give a better Grace.

"Can there, then, be an higher Provocation of Injustice, or a more notorious Violation of all the Rules of common Equity, (especially of that golden Rule, of ‖ doing to Others, as we would be done by" in a supposed Change of Circumstances,) than to defraud any Person of what he prefers above all other temporal Enjoyments; and what, in the Opinion of the wisest of Men, is really preferable to them."

There is, therefore, a great Tenderness due to the good Name and Credit of every Man, unless to direct Profligates, who proclaim their own Shame, & consequently have no Credit to lose. — Indeed, What is of so great a Value, (especially to Persons

(*) *Ut bene Solicitatæ reddit splendida Vita, bona Fama Vitæ Ornat.* See Knox's Essays, No. 85. on the Importance of a good Character with Regard to Interest.

ſons of Merit, or uſeful Qualifications, whoſe Birth, or Fortune, or Education, ſets them more conſpicuouſly in the Eye of the World, and gives their Example a wider Scope and Influence,) ſhould be valued above all things, and had in chief Eſteem, and under eſpecial Care. (*) — Again,

Another Means to prevent Evil-ſpeaking, is, to forego all Haſtineſs and Precipitancy in judging, before we know the WHOLE of the Caſe.

Nothing is more common than to pronounce, with a deciſive Air, upon a Man's whole Character from a ſuſpicious Circumſtance; & that too in Caſes where none but thoſe who are intimate with him can have deciſive Evidence. — Actions appear abſurd, which are yet founded upon weighty and ſubſtantial Reaſons, known only to the Party concerned; for "no Man knoweth the Thoughts of a Man, but the Spirit

(*) *Non ſolitus Laudem Famæ, Fidei, Oculis.*

The Reputation of a Statſeman, the Credit of a Merchant, and the Modeſty of a Woman, prevail more than their Power, Riches, or Beauty. *Magna Fama, quod nihil eſt, eſſe ſatis.* Almoſt every thing in this World depends upon Character. When, therefore, that hath once ſuffered an Imputation, all is loſt: for, for the moſt Part, neither the Perſons calumniated, (be they ever ſo innocent,) can recover it completely by their own Endeavours; nor the Perſons who have wronged them, (be they ever ſo deſirous,) reſtore it fully to its former State. A greater, or more irreparable Injury, therefore, cannot be done;

Spirit of a Man does in him? The Motives he acts upon may be a Secret confined to his own Breast; and which if we knew, we should entirely approve. A single Circumstance added to, will envenom a whole Relation; and there may be often a Circumstance omitted, which would give quite another Turn to the Whole. We should always incline to the favourable Side, when things are doubtful. If you mistake on the charitable Side, God will overlook your Mistake, & accept your Charity. But if you mistake thro Uncharitableness, all I shall say, is, may your Hearers consider your Invectives with Judgment, and your Maker with Mercy.

Praise, even when it is deserved, may be conferred indiscreetly; but Censure is surrounded with Peril on every Side: the least Impropriety makes it unpardonable. Time, Place, Person, Occasion, Company, and so many Circumstances must meet together, that the proper Opportunity to discommend, if we will but wait for it, cannot occur often.

The many Mistakes &c. — (under)

As a Spirit of Detraction and Calumny makes a Man shunned and hated by Company, who look upon him as a base Writ of Inquiry into their Words and Actions; So, on the contrary, a candid Disposition, that is for taking every thing at the best, and

ſons of Merit, or uſeful Qualifications, whoſe Birth, or Fortune, or Education, ſets them more conſpicuouſly in the Eye of the World, and gives their Example a wider Scope and Influence,) ſhould be valued above all things, and had in chief Eſteem, and under eſpecial Care. (*) — Again,

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The many Mistakes that have been in Life, should especially caution us in this: How many Times have we had Cause afterwards to acquit the Man whom thro' Precipitancy we first accused. "Examine the Matter therefore with Care; for many Times it is a Slander, and believe not every Tale."

Another Means to prevent this evil Practice, is from a Consideration of its opposite Virtue.

As a Spirit of Detraction and Calumny makes a Man shunned and hated by Company, who look upon him as a base Writ of Inquiry into their Words and Actions: So on the contrary, a candid Disposition, that is for taking every thing at the best, and

is rather for finding an Excuse for Error, than spreading it in its worst Light; such a candid Disposition gains a Man Love, Respect and Reverence, makes him embraced and courted by all Society, is a Curb on Scandal, and gains him the Applause even of those who delight in speaking Evil. Again,

It is a Practice but of mean Atchievement, and greatest Cowardice, & there is nothing in it whereof to glorie; Every one being able to do Mischief herein, (*) the Party traduced not being present to defend and vindicate himself. (†) Great

(*) *Facili Invenit Malitia sed obtegit Probe.*
Parva necat Morsu spatiosum Vipera Taurum;
Et Canis unus magnos sæpè tenetur Apros.

Calumny is diffused by all Arts and Methods of Propagation, nothing is too gross or too cruel to be practised; very little Regard is had to the Rules of honourable Hostility, but every Weapon is accounted lawful. Those who cannot make a Thrust at Life, or strike with Force, can however poison their Weapon, and play with petty Malevolence, and thus teize with feeble Blows and Disturbances.

not excepted,) who have tranſmitted the Fault as well as the Virtues of the Dead to Poſterity.

(†) There is a Tenderneſs, &c. (under)

Probability that the Fact, of which he is accused, might be otherwise than it is repreſented, there we ought to be ſilent. But where the Facts are ſo notorious, that they admit of no Doubt; ſo flagrantly bad, that they need no Aggravation, there we ought to conſider, that there is a Curſe denounced upon the Wicked, that their Memories ſhall rot;"

Great Minds will not be seen in mean Matters. If therefore, there was neither Sin nor Harm in the Practice; yet a good Man, a Man of any exalted Spirit, would not demean himself in it.

To relate the Fact, to represent our own Words and Actions, and those of others, in which we are interested, As THEY ARE, is no slight Attainment; but demonstrates a Superiority of Mind, which is the peculiar Quality of the highest Characters; but merely to produce, the meanest are capable of it.

Another Means I shall observe, of especial Use to render all the foregoing Ones effectual, is, the mortifying those irregular Passions from whence this unchristian Practice proceeds; as our Pride, which falsely persuades us that we exalt ourselves by debasing others; our Envy, which makes us look upon the Happiness of others with an evil Eye, and provokes us to disturb it; our Malice and Revenge, which

as there is a Promise to the Righteous, that "they shall be had in Remembrance." — It is wrong likewise to speak evil of the Dead, for the Sake of Evil speaking, without a View to the Information of the Living. — The most barbarous Nations have always paid a Sort of Divinity to the Dead; Death being always looked upon as a full Discharge from all the Errors of Life.

Pascitur in Vivis Livor, post Fata quiescit.

Virtutem cole dum vivis, et Famam invenies in Sepulchro.

is rather for finding an Excuse for Error, than spreading it in its worst Light; such a candid Disposition gains a Man Love, Respect and Reverence, makes him embraced and courted by all Society, is a Cure on Scandal, and gains him the Applause even of those who delight in speaking Evil. Again,

"It is a Practice but of mean Atchievement, and greatest Cowardice, & there is nothing in it whereof to glorie; Every one being able to do Mischief [redacted] being present to

(‡) *Longissimè absentes semper culpandi sunt.*

Backbiting, or speaking evil of those who are absent, especially of the Dead, is do low cowardly, that it would be to kill an Enemy incapable of making his own Defence. "When the Dead is at Rest, let his Remembrance rest." - *De Mortuis nil nisi bonum.* However, In some Cases, and under proper Restrictions, it either must be lawful to speak ill of the Dead, or we must condemn all Historians, (the sacred Ones not excepted,) who have transmitted the Faults as well as the Virtues of the Dead to Posterity.

There is [redacted] a Tenderness, &c. (under)

Probability that the Fact of which they are accused, ought be understood otherwise than it is represented, there we ought to be silent. But where the Facts are so notorious, that they admit of no Doubt; so flagrantly bad, that they need no Aggravation, there we ought to consider, that there is a Curse pronounced upon the Wicked, that "their Memories shall rot;"

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It is a Practice but of mean Atchievement, and greatest Cowardice, & there is nothing in it where-of to glorie; Every one being able to do Mischief [illegible] but being present to

[illegible]

* There is a Tenderness due to the Memories of those who are no longer in a Capacity to speak for themselves: and therefore we ought to be very careful not to charge any Crimes upon them, of which we have not strong authentic Proofs, either from personal Knowledge, or from Credible, or unsuspected Veracity. — Where there is even a faint Probability that the Fact, of which we are treating, might be otherwise than it is represented, there we ought to be silent. But where the Facts are so notorious, that they admit of no Doubt; so flagrantly bad, that they need no Aggravation, there we ought to consider, that there is a Curse denounced upon the Wicked, that their Memories shall rot;"

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To relate the Fact, to represent our own Words and Actions, and those of others, in which we are interested, AS THEY ARE, is no slight Attainment; but demonstrates a Superiority of Mind, which is the peculiar Quality of the highest Characters; but merely to traduce, the meanest are capable of it.

Another Means I shall observe, of especial Use to render all the foregoing Ones effectual, is, the mortifying those irregular Passions from whence this unchristian Practice proceeds; as our Pride, which falsely persuades us that we exalt ourselves by debasing others; our Envy, which makes us look upon the Happiness of others with an evil Eye, and provokes us to disturb it; our Malice and Revenge, which

rot;" as there is a Promise to the Righteous, that "they shall be had in Remembrance." — It is wrong likewise to speak evil of the Dead, for the Sake of Evil speaking, without a View to the Information of the Living. — The most barbarous Nations have always paid a Sort of Divinity to the Dead; Death being always looked upon as a full Discharge from all the Errors of Life.

Pascitur in Vivis Livor, post Fata quiescit.
Virtutem cole dum vivis, et Famam invenies in Sepulchro.

which prompt us to injurious Resentments; — impertinent Curiosity, which is always meddling with other's Concerns. But, nothing is more necessary in Order to master this reigning Sin, than a firm Resolution never to speak the LEAST Ill of any one; for, whoever gives himself the Liberty to publish the Evil he knows of another, tho ever so inconsiderable, and talks with Pleasure of such Faults, tho known to all Men, will be likely to fall into REAL Defamations. For, it is difficult to stop where the Power and Corruption of Nature is strong. Besides by indulging SMALL Neglects we fortify our evil Inclinations, and by Degrees contract a Habit of Detraction.

But lastly, — If none of these things can move us to any due Regard hereto; yet, let Self-interest have some Effect upon us.

When we are going to speak reproachfully of Others, let us consider, whether we ourselves do not lie open, by some Fault or other, to the same Treatment, — There are very few so innocent and free, either from Infirmities, or greater Faults, as not to be liable hereto some Way or other.

Even the wisest, and best, and most perfect among Men, have some little Vanity or Affectation

which

which lays him open to the Raillery of the Mimical or Malicious. (*) There

(*) *Ille suam Faciem transformat, et alterat Artę.*
Derisor multis fatis Laudatore movetur.
Sic Oculos, sic ille Manus, sic Ora movebat.

Those who have a Talent for Mimicry, would do well to consider that the most successful among them, is always the most absurd, and that an Ape is infinitely his superior. His Profession is to imitate and ridicule those natural Defects and Deformities for which no Man is in the least accountable; and, in the Imitation of which, he makes himself, for the Time, as disagreeable as those he mimicks. — Besides, they should consider how it exposeth them to the Danger of making many Enemies. They should therefore resist the Temptation of displaying their Humour at the Expence of others.

Perhaps it will be said, It is only Foibles they expose: - but even those are too delicate to be touched. If we will but deal so impartially as to make the Case our own, we shall find, that the least Degree of Contempt touches us to the quick: Why, then, should we be so cruel as to attack others with that Weapon, which, most of all, we dread ourselves?

Nemo Mortalium omnibus Horis sapit.
Humanum est errare. — Homines sumus, non Dii.

Every Man has his genial Vices, his constitutional Errors; and tho he may appear a Saint in all things else; yet, it is feared, he will be found a Sinner in these. — Who is so happy as to please all, and to be envied of none? Who is so good, that none complain of?

Censure not rashly, Nature's apt to halt:
Look inward; he's not born that has no Fault.

There is no Man that sinneth not.

When any thing therefore displeaseth us; before we condemn it in others, we should inquire whether we are not guilty of it ourselves; and by so doing, from whatever we hear or see, we may draw some Advantage. And things are in a fair Way, when one Man is the better for another's Failings.

There is, perhaps, no Crime, except Murder, that is of such real bad Consequence, as Slander and uncharitable Defamation. (*) "It is a Pestilence that walketh in Darkness," and "a secret Stab," against which there is, many Times, no Possibility of Defence.

Nor, Is there any Sin for which can be pleaded so little Excuse. Other Vices have something in View from which a Self-gratification may be propoled: the ambitous Man may expatiate on the Charms of Power; the Libertine on the Delights of Sensuality; and the Miser on the Enjoyment of Wealth: but the Slanderer proposeth no other Pleasure to himself, but that of seeing Others wretched. It proceeds from a corrosive, self-tormenting Turn of Mind, incapable of being either happy itself, or suffering others to be so. (†)

A good Word is an easy Obligation; but, not to speak

(*) See Page 253.

(†) It is an Aggravation of the Crime, or at least of the Folly of Calumny, that commonly there is *nothing to be gained* by the Commission of it. "Men do not despise a Thief, if he steal to satisfy his Soul, when he is hungry; but, if he be found, he shall restore seven Fold; he shall give all the Substance of his House." But he who steals away our Reputation, has no Pretence to the Plea of Necessity; since what he takes away from another, does not therefore fall into his Hands; for, when he hath ruined us by Robbery, he himself is no richer.

speak evil, requires only our Silence, which costs us nothing. And! It is a melancholy Reflection to think there should be in Mankind an uncharitable Spirit, which feels greater Pleasure in detecting Faults, than in commending Virtues.

Upon the Whole: — When our Lord declares that our Treatment of our Brethren HERE, shall be the Measure of his Proceedings with us HEREAFTER, and at the Last Day, how unreasonable, I may say, dangerous, must uncharitable Censures be!

Bear, then, with the Faults of others, as you expect they should bear with yours; Faults which frail Nature cannot well guard against; and which, therefore, good Nature should overlook: Be just to their Merits, charitable to their Failings, and tender to their Misfortunes; because, if we have not fallen into the same or the like Faults, it is not our own Strength, but God's more especial Grace that preserved us. But,

As after all, "it must needs be that Offences come," it will be no mean Peice of Wisdom, by prudent Conduct and Reason, to fortify ourselves against them.

As to those, whose Lot it is to be evil-spoken of, it becomes such, with all others, so to behave as to

give no Occaſion of Scandal, or Offence to any one. Evil-ſpeaking is a Fault, but there is a Fault far greater than This, and which more immediately concerns ourſelves, [viz] when we give real Occaſion for this evil Practice. (*)

Evil-ſpeaking, it may be ſaid, is a Vice; and conſequently no Man ought to puniſh one Vice by being guilty of another himſelf: It is true; and yet it is as true that they deſerve ſuch Uſage, and no Pity when they receive it. (‡)

The Providence of God permits bad Men to puniſh and plague one another, altho' both are guilty in his Sight.

Every Chriſtian Duty and good Office ſhould adorn us in this Life; (†) therefore, when Perſons fail in theſe things, their due Conſequences are to be expected. (§)

Are we, therefore, guilty of the Evil ſaid of us? Let us reform, and cut off all Occaſions for the future,

(*) *Murmurat Improbus Conſcientiâ tactus.*

(‡) Few Men fear to be deſpiſed, except thoſe who really deſerve it.

(†) A good Name without good Qualities to ſupport it, is ſuch an Incongruity in the *moral* World, as no Irregularity in the *natural* bears any Analogy or Reſemblance to.

(§) There is as much Policy required to ſecure a Reputation, as Wit and Learning to deſerve it.

ture, and so turn the Malice of our Enemies to our greatest and best Advantage; and defeat their ill Intentions by making so good an Use of it: (*) and then, it will be well for us that we were thus maligned.

Are we innocent? We may so much the better bear it patiently; imitating herein the Pattern of our Blessed Saviour, "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (‡)

In this Case we ought to bear it, and probably shall,

(*) Philip of Macedon said, "He was beholden to the Athenian Orators for reproving him; for he would endeavour both by Words & Actions, to make them Liars." And Plato, hearing that it was asserted by some that he was a very bad Man, said, *At Ego sic vivam ut illis non habeatur Fides* - rightly judging that the best Way to refute Calumny, was, *non Scriptis et Clamoribus, sed sanctè vivendo, et recta faciendo*. — A virtuous Man may innocently be revenged of his Enemies, by persisting in well doing, by being a virtuous and honest Man, (see Wisdom 2, 15.) by living so that no One may believe them: and a wicked Man by reforming his Life. see 1 Peter 2. 12. *Hoc qui facit, (i.e) qui seipsum, probum et honestum Virum præstiterit, non modò sibi maximè prodest, sed etiam Inimicum maximè discrutiat.* — Are we traduced, therefore, let us rejoice, if guiltless; if guilty, amend. — *Falsus Rumor citò opprimitur, et Vitæ posterior indicat de priore. Cessat Vitium, cessabit et Rumor. Ut Ignis Aquâ extinguitur; Ità, Innocentiâ mala Fama.*

(‡) *Bona Fama in Tenebris proprium Splendorem obtinet; nec potest Decus rectè Factorum obscurari; latet enim in ipso Relatore, si non respondet Opinio Populi.*

ſhall, (after a due Vindication,) with much Patience, as a thing beneath our Notice; (*) and not be diverted from our Duty by any idle Reflexions the ſilly World may make upon us; for, their Cenſures are not in our Power, (‡) and conſequently ſhould not be any Part of our Concern; (†) at all Times

(*) It is a Part of Prudence not to ſink under the Impreſſion of an ill Report, provided there is Integrity and Innocence to ſupport that Firmneſs of Mind. A wiſe Man will not make his Life precarious: He ſtands or falls to his own Conſcience, and leaves the World to take its Courſe. Miſchiefs contemned loſe their Force. As the Wind kindles a Torch inſtead of extinguiſhing it, ſo falſe Reports redouble the Luſtre of Virtue. In Fact, Calumniators are then only made conſiderable, when they are taken Notice of: They are like thoſe imperceptible Inſects which are diſcovered by the Microſcope, and cannot be made the Subject of Obſervation without being magnified.

We ſhould always conform ourſelves to our Situations, and, being ſenſible that we behave properly, diſregard all the Reproaches and contumelious Language which the ignorant & envious may load us with; eſpecially, too, if the truly Judicious are ſatisfied with our Conduct.

Contempt of Calumny takes away all Sting from the Wound, as well as all Pleaſure from the Calumniator. If you are ſenſitive to Malice, you are in the Power of the worſt and meaneſt of Mankind. Conſider, while there are ſo many evil Tongues in the World, ready to blaſt the faireſt Character; and ſo many open Ears, ready to receive their Reports. See Note (*) Page 197.

Quicquid Fama Hominum et Populus de te loquitur et ſentit, et quicquid te non es, nec in te non habes, nec agnoſcis, illud reſpue, et repudia, nec pro tuo agnoſce.

(†) Let the Weak and Ill-natured enjoy the poor Pleaſure of whiſpering Calumny and Detraction, and let the Man of Senſe and Spirit

Times maintaining an inviolable Perseverance in [illegible] display the Virtues and Dignity of disregarding them. The Dog have the Moon, but the Moon shines on in all its tranquil Serenity and Lustre, & moves in its Orbit with undisturbed Regularity. The Mark of a Man of Probity lies in keeping Reason at the Head of Practice, and being easy in his Condition: to live in a Crowd of Objects without suffering either in Sense, his Virtue, or his Quiet: to have a good Understanding at Home, and to be governed by that divine Principle within him: to be all Truth in his Words, & Justice in his Actions: and if the whole World should disbelieve his Integrity, dispute his Character, & question his Happiness, would neither take ill in the least, nor alter his Measures; but pursue the right End of living with all the Honesty, Ease, and Resignation imaginable. — Nothing can be truly Infamous but what is wicked; and therefore Shame can never disturb an innocent and virtuous Mind.

We should, therefore, be careful to deserve a good Reputation, by doing well; and when that Care is once taken, not to be over-anxious about the Success. A wise Man, who values himself upon the Score of Virtue, and not of Opinion, thinks himself neither better nor worse for the Opinion of others. See No. 355. of the Spectator.

Mischiefs contemned, lose their Force; whereas too tender a Sense of what other People say ill of us, does but entertain the Malice of the World, which desires no more but that it may disturb us; and besides, it only, in the Altercation, increases the Report, but also, (tho' ever so innocent,) gains Credit to it with the Simple, who believe every Word. The absolute Want of such a Sense; when we are injured, and know ourselves innocent, in this Case to be negligent, believing that Truth will bear itself out; and consequently to be moved at nothing; (it is said,) is the contrary Extreme, that produceth the same Effect. *Negligere quid de se quisque sentiat, non sine magna arrogantia est. sed etiam animus dissolutus.* Prudence, therefore, must direct us in this Case.

If thou art suspected, answer with Freedom; whom should Suspicion affright, but the guilty?

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(‡) It is in the Power of every Man to preſerve his Probity; but no Man living has it in his Power to ſay, that he can preſerve his Reputation, while there are ſo many evil Tongues in the World, ready to blaſt the faireſt Character; and ſo many open Ears, ready to receive their Reports. See Note (*) Page 197.

Quicquid Famæ Hominum et Populus de te loquitur et ſentit, et quicquid tu non es, nec in te non habes, nec agnoſcis, illud reſpue, et repudia, nec ſpe tua agnoſce.

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our Duty; "that, whereas they ſpeak evil of us, as of Evil-doers, they may be aſhamed, when they ſhall behold our good Works ſhining before them;" for, "ſo is the Will of God, that with well-doing we ſhould put to Silence the Ignorance of fooliſh Men." (*) We

A juſt Vindication of ourſelves, therefore, ſeems to be the due Mein in the Caſe, & ſhould ſatisfy us accordingly: for, it is a ſtanding Rule in Philoſophy, never to make the Opinion of others the Meaſure of our Behaviour: — The Scandal raiſed by ill Men is like Dirt thrown by Children or Fools at Random, without Provocation; it may daub filthily at firſt, but is eaſily waſhed out. I value the Malice of ſuch Men as little as their Friendſhip, the One being as fickle, as the Other is falſe.

(*) A Man's *firſt* Care ſhould be to avoid the Reproaches of his own Heart; his *next*, to eſcape, (if poſſible,) the Cenſures of the World: If the Laſt interferes with the Former, it ought to be entirely neglected; but otherwiſe, there cannot be a greater Satisfaction to an honeſt Mind, than to ſee thoſe Approbations which it gives itſelf, ſeconded by the Applauſes of the Public: A Man is more ſure of his Conduct, when the Verdict he paſſes upon his own Behaviour, is thus warranted and confirmed by the Opinion of all that know him.

Aſſurance is the Faculty of poſſeſſing a Man's ſelf, or of ſaying and doing indifferent things without any Uneaſineſs or Emotion in the Mind. That which gives a Man Aſſurance, is, (generally ſpeaking,) a Mind fixed and determined in itſelf to do nothing againſt the Rules of Honour and Decency; an open and aſſured Behaviour is the natural Conſequence of ſuch a Reſolution. A Mind thus armed, if his Words or Actions are at any Time miſrepreſented, retires within himſelf, and from a Conſciouſneſs of his own Integrity aſſumes Force enough to deſpiſe the little Cenſures of Ignorance and Malice. — Have Patience awhile;

We should never be concerned at what is spoken against us; for, if the Accusations be true, we ought rather to correct Ourselves, than refute Others! (*) If false, the Contempt of such Discourses will destroy the Belief of them; but Concern would argue their Truth, and put it in the Power of the vilest Person to disturb our Repose. (†) Besides,

We must consider that, tho it be a Misfortune to be unjustly blamed, Slanders are not long-lived: Truth is the Child of Time; e'er long she will appear to vindicate our Cause.

Quicquid sub Terrâ est, in apricum proferet Ætas,
Defodiet, condetque nitentia. — —

Sed nemo adeo sui negligens est, aut tam contemptor famæ suæ, qui non maculam aliquam sibi adspersam abstergat: Ita, Veritas aliquandiu laborare potest, extingui vero nequaquam. — Ut Ignis, quo pluribus Lignis obruitur, eo magis accenditur: Sic et Invidia & Veritas, quo magis oppugnantur, eo magis eminent atque illustrantur. — Ut Palma, quo gravius onerator, eo fortius renititur: Ita, quamvis obtrectatorum Inscientia, et Invidiâ ut Lolio obruatur.

(*) It is a Remark of *Antisthenes*, that if a Man would lead a secure and unblamable Life, he should either have ingenious and honest Friends, or very sharp and bitter Enemies; because the First, by their kind Admonitions, would keep him from sinning, the Latter, by evil Words and vehement bitter Invectives.

An Enemy sees and understands more in Matters relating to us than our Friends do, because, (according to *Plato*,) Love is blind, especially in discerning the thing beloved; but Spite, and Malice, Ill-will, Wrath, Hatred, and Contempt, are very inquisitive and quick-sighted; Friendship in Time grows speechless, and leaves off that Freedom it once used; we must expect, therefore, to hear Truth only from the Mouths of our Enemies. — We easily forget our Faults, when not taken notice of.

(†) Is your Reputation sullied by invidious Calumnies, rejoice that your Character cannot suffer but by false Imputations. You are arraigned in a Court of Judicature, and unjustly condemned; Passion or Prejudice have influenced your Prosecutor and Judge, and you cannot forbear lamenting that you suffer though innocent: but would it have been better that you should have suffered being guilty? He that values himself upon Conscience, not Opinion, has

our Duty; "that, whereas they speak evil of us, as of Evil-doers, they may be ashamed, when they shall behold our good Works shining before them;" for, "so is the Will of God, that with well-doing we should put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men." (*) We

A just Vindication of ourselves, therefore, seems to be the due Mein in the Case, & should satisfy us accordingly: for, it is a standing Rule in Philosophy, never to make the Opinion of others the Measure of our Behaviour: — The Scandal raised by ill Men is like Dirt thrown by Children or Fools at Random, without Provocation; it may daub filthily at first, but is easily washed out. I value the Malice of such Men as little as their Friendship, the One being as fickle, as the Other is false.

(*) A Man's *first* Care should be to avoid the Reproaches of his own Heart; his *next*, to escape, (if possible,) the Censures of the World: If the Last interferes with the Former, it ought to be entirely neglected; but otherwise, there cannot be a greater Satisfaction to an honest Mind, than to see those Approbations which it gives itself, seconded by the Applauses of the Public: A Man is more sure of his Conduct, when the Verdict he passes upon his own Behaviour, is thus warranted and confirmed by the Opinion of all that know him.

Assurance is the Faculty of possessing a Man's self, or of saying and doing indifferent things without any Uneasiness or Emotion in the Mind. That which gives a Man Assurance, is, (generally speaking,) a Mind fixed and determined in itself to do nothing against the Rules of Honour and Decency; an open and assured Behaviour is the natural Consequence of such a Resolution. A Mind thus armed, if his Words or Actions are at any Time misrepresented, retires within himself, and from a Consciousness of his own Integrity assumes Force enough to despise the little Censures of Ignorance and Malice. — Have Patience awhile;

We should never be concerned at what is spoken against us, for if the Accusations be true, we ought rather to correct Ourselves, than rest in Others: (*) If false, the Contempt of such Discourses will destroy the Belief of them; but Concern would argue their Truth, and put it in the Power of the vilest Person to disturb our Repose. (†) Besides,

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Defodiet, condetque nitentia. — —

Sicut Animadversiones Legum Habitus, Opus Medicinæ, sic Maledicta Invidiæ efficacem: Ita, Veritas aliquandiu laborare potest, extingui non potest. — *Ut Ignis, quo pluribus Lignis obruitur, eo magis accenditur: Sic et Fides et Veritas, quo magis oppugnantur, eo magis eminent atque illustriores.* — *Ut Palma, quo gravius premitur, eo fortius resilitur: Ita, quo magis obtenebratus Innocentia, et lividis de Luto refulget.*

(*) It is a Remark of *Antisthenes*, that if a Man would lead a secure and unblameable Life, he should either have ingenuous and honest Friends, or very sharp and bitter Enemies; because the First, by their kind Admonitions, would keep him from sinning, the Latter by evil Words and vehement bitter Invectives.

(†) Reason to fear Reproaches. A virtuous and innocent Person is like Gold, the more he is tried, the more he is refined, and the more he is opposed, the more he is approved; Wrongs may try him, but cannot imprint in him any false Stamp. The Man of Integrity therefore, tho slandered, stands upon an Eminence, and sees human things below him; the Tempest indeed may reach him, but he stands secure & collected against it, on the Basis of conscious Virtue, which the severest Storm can seldom shake, and never overthrow.

be evil-ſpoken of, yet it is their Fault who do it, & not our's; and therefore, ſhould not put us beſide ourſelves: Another's Injury to us, ſhould not make us uneaſy to ourſelves. — We are not to revenge the Injuries done to us; no not upon them who do them, much leſs upon our own Perſons.

"In Patience therefore, poſſeſs ye your Souls" Let us not part with one Virtue, becauſe Malice endeavours to rob us of all the reſt - When they ſpeak evil of us, let us "live ſo that no One may believe them." (*)

Above all things, we ſhould be careful not to be too inquiſitive into what is ſaid of us, (†) nor too haſty in crediting, &c. [under]

wiſe Son of Sirach, "Admoniſh a Friend, (ſays he,) it may be he hath not done it; and if he hath done it, that he do it no more: — admoniſh a Friend, it may

(*) It muſt give particular Pleaſure to read the Accounts of the Sayings and Behaviour of the old Philoſophers reſpecting Malice and Detraction. "The Way to ſilence Calumny, ſays *Bias*, is always to be exerciſed in that which is praiſe-worthy." *Socrates* was remarkable for Patience under Calumny, and when One admired his Indifference to Slander, he replied, "They do not *hurt* me, becauſe they do not *hit* me;" and, after being ſentenced to Death, he told his Friends that "he had always accuſtomed himſelf to regard Truth and not Cenſure, and therefore he was not troubled at his Condemnation, becauſe he was not guilty." *Epictetus* ſays, "If any One ſpeak ill of thee, conſider whether it be true or not; if it is

[under]

true

a delicate Regard for Reputation, as renders them much affected by Calumny; this Senſibility with Reſpect to Slander does not always ariſe from Pride or Self-love, but knowing the great Value of Reputation, they earneſtly wiſh to preſerve it unblemiſhed. But from whatever Motive this Curioſity may ariſe, it is certain that our Knowledge of the Reports concerning ourſelves always produces much Uneaſineſs, and ſometimes much Miſchief. No Virtue, no Prudence, no Generoſity can preſerve us from Slander or Miſrepreſentation. Every Man of Eminence, (eſpecially if in any public Capacity) has thoſe who hate or envy, and would injure him. Theſe will ſee his Actions with an evil Eye, and will repreſent them to others as they behold them. Many alſo from Careleſſneſs, or Wantonneſs, or a Deſire to entertain their Company, invent or circulate ſlanderous Tales, and thus ſport with reſpectable Characters; and as Calumny is a Kind of Salt that ſeaſons moſt Converſations, theſe Tales and Whiſpers of Scandal are too much regarded. Since then all public or eminent Characters are frequently the Topic of Converſation, and may often be ſlandered, if they make Enquiries of what is ſaid concerning themſelves, they will be continually uneaſy; beſides, many of the poiſoned Arrows being ſhot in the dark, no Abilities can repel the Blow, nor can Innocence ſhield from the Aſſailant, but the obſcure Inſinuation does Miſchief without the Poſſibility of Reſiſtance; on Account of all this therefore it is beſt not to be too anxious to diſcover Attacks, which when diſcovered make us unhappy, and cannot be ſucceſsfully reſiſted.

[under]

Again

may be, he hath not said it, and if he have, that he speak it not again; "Admonish a Friend, for many Times it is a Slander, and believe not every Tale." "Blame not before thou hast examined the Truth; understand first, and then rebuke: for, there is One that slippeth in his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is He that hath not offended with his Tongue?" — Upon the Whole,

As the Vice before us is so wide-spread an Evil, & of so pernicious a Consequence, every Argument All that hath been said, may be little enough to countervail against it, for "the Tongue is a little Member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth! It is an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poison." (*).

If therefore, (after all we have said,) we must needs be censuring; let us turn our Censures INWARDLY upon Ourselves, where we shall find a large Theatre of Vice and Folly, enough to declaim against, without going abroad in Search of more. Let us look with severe and unbyassed Eyes into our own

(*) There is a Lust in Man, no Charm can tame
Of basely publishing his Neighbour's Shame;
On Eagle's Wings immortal Scandals fly,
While virtuous Actions are but born and die.

See Note (*) Page 197, and Note (*) Page 208.

be evil-ſpoken of, yet it is their Fault who do it, & not our's; and therefore, ſhould not put us beſide ourſelves: Another's Injury to us, ſhould not make us uneaſy to ourſelves. — We are not to revenge the Injuries done to us, no not upon them who do them, much leſs upon our own Perſons.

"In Patience therefore, poſſeſs ye your Souls" Let us not part with one Virtue, becauſe Malice endeavours to rob us of all the reſt - When they ſpeak evil of us, let us "live ſo that no One may believe them." (*)

too haſty in crediting the Evil that may be ſpoken of us. Excellent to this Purpoſe is the Advice of the wiſe Son of Sirach, "Admoniſh a Friend, (ſays he,) it may be he hath not done it; and if he hath done it, that he do it no more: - admoniſh a Friend, it may

(*) It muſt give particular Pleaſure to read the Accounts of the Sayings and Behaviour of the old Philoſophers reſpecting Malice and Detraction. "The Way to ſilence Calumny, ſays *Bias*, is always to be exerciſed in that which is praiſe-worthy." *Socrates* was remarkable for Patience under Calumny, and when One admired his Indifference to Slander, he replied, "They do not *hurt* me, becauſe they do not *hit* me;" and, after being ſentenced to Death, he told his Friends that "he had always accuſtomed himſelf to regard Truth and not Cenſure, and therefore he was not troubled at his Condemnation, becauſe he was not guilty." *Epictetus* ſays, "If any One ſpeak ill of thee, conſider whether it be true or not; if it is

[under] true

a delicate Regard for Reputation, as renders them much affected by Calumny; this Senſibility with Reſpect to Slander does not always ariſe from Pride or Self-love, but knowing the great Value of Reputation, they earneſtly wiſh to preſerve it unblemiſhed. But from whatever Motive this Curioſity may ariſe, it is certain that our Knowledge of the Reports concerning ourſelves always produces much Uneaſineſs, and ſometimes much Miſchief. No Virtue, no Prudence, no Generoſity can preſerve us from Slander or Miſrepreſentation. Every Man of Eminence, (eſpecially if in any public Capacity) has thoſe who hate or envy, and would injure him. Theſe will ſee his Actions with an evil Eye, and will repreſent them to others as they behold them. Many alſo from Careleſſneſs, or Wantonneſs, or a Deſire to entertain their Company, invent or circulate ſlanderous Tales, and thus ſport with reſpectable Characters; and as Calumny is a Kind of Salt that ſeaſons moſt Converſations, theſe Tales and Whiſpers of Scandal are too much regarded.

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Again

may be, he blames falsely; and if he have, that he speak it not again; Admonish a Friend, for many Times it is a Slander; and believe not every Tale. Blame not before thou hast examined the Truth; understand first, and then rebuke: for there is One that slippeth in his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is He that hath not offended with his Tongue?" — Upon the Whole,

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See Note (*) Page 197, and Note (*) Page 208.

be evil-spoken of, yet it is their Fault who do it, & not our's; and therefore, should not put us beside ourselves: Another's Injury to us, should not make us uneasy to ourselves. — We are not to revenge the Injuries done to us; no not upon them who do them, much less upon our own Persons.

"In Patience therefore, possess ye your Souls" Let us not part with one Virtue, because Malice endeavours to rob us of all the rest. When they speak evil of us, let us "live so that no One may believe them." (*)

true, reform thyself; if it be false, thou hast the Comforts of Innocence." Above all, we should take Notice of what *Plato* hath said upon this Subject; being told that he had many Enemies that spoke ill of him, "It is no Matter, (said he,) I will endeavour so to live, that none shall believe them." This is the best Way of drawing the Sting out of Reproaches, and a good Method to avoid sinful Anger and Revenge for Malice and Injuries, as well as make Slander turn to our Benefit. *Plutarch* lays it down as a Rule, "If you would revenge yourself upon your Enemy, &c. [under]

self upon your Enemy, not to represent him as effeminate, and incontinent, scurrilous, or uncivil; but rather to approve yourself as a Man of Virtue and Sobriety, and Truth and Probity, and Humanity and Candour to whom you converse with, for This would be a silent, but a visible Reproach to him, and every One will condemn him for envying and maligning such conspicuous Worth and Innocence; and even he himself, (if hath any Remains of Shame,) will nearly be ashamed himself, to see his own gross Failings and Imperfections exposed so nakedly to View, and upon so disadvantageous a Comparison." see Note (*) p.

Mala de te loquuntur Homines; sed mali: mala de te loquuntur, sed de se.

(*) The best Dispositions have usually the most Sensibility, and such a delicate Regard for Reputation, as renders them much affected by Calumny; this Sensibility with Respect to Slander does not always arise from Pride or Self-love, but knowing the great Value of Reputation, they earnestly wish to preserve it unblemished. But from whatever Motive this Curiosity may arise, it is certain that our Knowledge of the Reports concerning ourselves always produces much Uneasiness, and sometimes much Mischief. No Virtue, no Prudence, no Generosity can preserve us from Slander or Misrepresentation. Every Man of Eminence, (especially if in any public Capacity) has those who hate or envy, and would injure him. These will see his Actions with an evil Eye, and will represent them to others as they behold them. Many also from Carelessness, or Wantonness, or a Desire to entertain their Company, invent or circulate slanderous Tales, and thus sport with respectable Characters; and as Calumny is a Kind of Salt that seasons most Conversations, these Tales and Whispers of Scandal are too much regarded. Since then all public or eminent Characters are frequently the Topic of Conversation, and may often be slandered, if they make Enquiries of what is said concerning themselves, they will be continually uneasy; besides, many of the poisoned Arrows being shot in the dark, no Abilities can repel the Blow, nor can Innocence shield from the Assailant; but the obscure Insinuation does Mischief without the Possibility of Resistance; on Account of all this therefore it is best not to be too anxious to discover Attacks, which when discovered make us unhappy, and cannot be successfully resisted.

[under] Again,

may be, he hath no such thing, and if he have, that he speak it not again; "Admonish a Friend, for many Times it is a Slander; and believe not every Tale." "Blame not before thou hast examined the Truth; understand first, and then rebuke: for, there is One that slippeth in his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is He that hath not offended with his Tongue?" — Upon the Whole,

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If therefore, (after all we have said,) we must needs be censuring, let us turn our Censures IMPARTIALLY upon Ourselves, where we shall find a large Theatre of Vice and Folly, enough to declaim against, without going abroad in Search of more. Let us look with severe and unbyassed Eyes into our own

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be evil-ſpoken of, yet it is their Fault who do it, & not our's; and therefore, ſhould not put us beſide ourſelves. Another's Injury to us, ſhould not make us uneaſy to ourſelves. — We are not to revenge the Injuries done to us, no not upon them who do them, much leſs upon our own Perſons.

"In Patience therefore, poſſess ye your Souls" Let us not part with one Virtue, becauſe Malice endeavours to rob us of all the reſt. When they

Again, — It ſhould be conſidered, that as this Kind of Inquiſitiveneſs frequently occaſions Lying and Diſcord, by Perſons bringing falſe Reports to pleaſe the inquiſitive Perſon, therefore this Sort of Curioſity ſhould be avoided; but even ſuppoſing that the Account of ſome ſpeaking againſt us is ſtrictly true, and not the leaſt exaggerated, yet if we know any thing of the World, we muſt be ſenſible that a Man without relinquiſhing Friendſhip for us, may, by Inadvertency, or the Fear of offending ſome of the Company, ſpeak what is contrary to his Heart, and what he may be very ſorry for afterwards; and beſides this, we ſhould conſider that perhaps we have ſpoken againſt that very Perſon, or elſe we have often ſpoke againſt ſome other Perſons that we regard, and would wiſh to ſerve. Finally, it is beſt not to make any Enquiries concerning what is ſaid of us, for then we cannot reſent or revenge it. How many have by ſuch an haſty and imprudent Conduct raiſed Suſpicions againſt themſelves, and made Enemies of thoſe who would otherwiſe have continued their Friends, and perhaps been very ſerviceable to them. — Upon the whole,

Though in ſome peculiar Circumſtances, and reſpecting ſome particular Perſons, perhaps it may be proper to make ſome Enquiries to guard againſt *Treachery*, yet in general it is by far the beſt not to make *any* Enquiries reſpecting what others ſay of us, and if we happen to hear of any Calumny, to pay very little Attention to it, and not to revenge it, but let it waſte its Force unregarded.

may be, he hath no such thing, and if he have, that he speak it not again; Admonish a Friend, for many Times it is a Slander; and believe not every Tale. "Blame not before thou hast examined the Truth; understand first, and then rebuke: for there is One that slippeth in his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is He that hath not offended with his Tongue?" — Upon the Whole,

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If therefore, (after all we have said,) we must needs be censuring, let us turn our Censures inwardly upon Ourselves, where we shall find a large Theatre of Vice and Folly, enough to declaim against, without going abroad in Search of more. Let us look with severe and unbyassed Eyes into our own

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own Bosoms, examine our Actions and see what Levities we have from Nature, and how many more we have contracted by Custom. When we have discovered a Fault, let us pursue ourselves yet closet and try what Figure we make under it, and with what Eye we should behold it in another Person.

Our Zeal, our Impartiality, our Quickness of Apprehension will here be well employed: Severity, (I had almost said Uncharitableness,) will be commendable, when our own Misconduct is the Object of it. Charity will suppose several mitigating Circumstances in the Case of other Delinquents, which cannot be supposed in our own; because we judge of those criminal Actions, of which we ourselves have been guilty, by Evidence & Self-consciousness, and know how they have been in all Respects circumstantiated, but we see the Conduct of other Men only in exterior Appearance, without knowing the secret Motives of it; and what we do not see, or know to their Disadvantage, we ought not in Charity, to presume: Perhaps he was in great Measure surprized into it, or did it thro Ignorance, and not thro any malicious Intention, or he was under some very pressing and violent Circumstances of Temptation; These are the Alleviations which a Person of Candour will frame in Excuse of the Sins

or

or Escapes of other Men; but how far they are applicable to Ourselves, we are to judge not by the Rules of Charity, but by Evidence, and the Report of our own Consciences.

The different Judgments, therefore, which we form of any Action by the Rules of Charity, "which hopeth all things and believeth all things," on the one Hand; and from what we CERTAINLY know concerning all the aggravating Circumstances of our own Crimes on the Other, improve the Mote in our Brother's Eye, into a Beam in our own, and give him clearly, and in every Respect, the Advantage of the Comparison; which, if we duly consider, it would be a Rule to us, always to think the best of Others, and the worst of Ourselves; and we should better comprehend the Reason of the Apostle's Advice, that "in all Lowliness of Mind Each should esteem Other better than himself." (*)

(*) When we have strained our Invention to aggravate our Neighbour's Guilt, and laid all the odious Colours that Calumny can cast upon it, whom we have described him, as ungrateful to God, injurious to his Brother, and even the worst of Enemies to himself, let us change our foul Design, and try whether the disagreeable Character will not suit ourselves. It may be, it will look upon us like a Picture that seems to direct its Eyes to every One that beholds it.

E'en you remark another's Sin,
Bid thy own Conscience look within.

Vitia Nemo sine nascitur. Optimus ille qui minimis urgetur.

If, upon an impartial Review, of his own past Life, any of us should find himself "without Sin, let him cast the first Stone." — Let him be the foremost in attacking the Reputation of his Neighbour: but I am perswaded our Tenderness for other Men will rise in Proportion to our Acquaintance with ourselves. (*) If

Human Nature will have human Frailties.

(*) See the latter Part of Note (*) Page 279.

Tho, therefore, we may observe the various Tempers and Actions of Others; yet we should pass by human Infirmities with a generous Greatness; Let us criticise upon nothing more than our own Actions, and we shall see Reason enough to pardon the Weaknesses of others.

(*) There is nothing would make us mend our Faults so readily, as to be able impartially to discern and avow them in others. It is at this just Distance, that they appear what they are, and raise in us an Indignation equal to their Demerit. Now the same Vices which are deformed and insupportable in Others, tho they seem to rest without Weight in us as in their proper Center, yet are equally odious to every Beholder. Wise Conduct turns upon two Centers, the *past*, and the *future*; He that has a faithful Memory, and a vast Foresight is out of Danger of censuring in others those things which he may have been guilty of himself, or condemning an Action which, in a parallel Case and in like Circumstances, it will be impossible for him to avoid. He who talks and communes often *with* himself, seldom talks vainly *of* himself, or uncharitably of others. It is a great Wisdom to forget other Men's Faults, by minding our own.

Meekness and Charity are the certain Effect of Self-knowledge. The more a Man is acquainted with his own Failings, the more he is disposed to make Allowances for those of Others. The Knowledge he hath of himself will incline him to be as severe in his Animadversi-

ons

If we are conscious of our own Imperfections, (& if we ever entertain one serious Thought, we cannot but be conscious of them) we shall not hastily pronounce Judgment upon those, who are tempted as we are, and, with us, are too willing to comply with the Temptation.

A frequent Review of our Case will shew us the many Evils which our Nature is too prone to commit. And if we have any Concern for our Miscarriages, we shall bewail the Faults of others, instead of making them the Subject of our Mirth and comfort our Laughter. For it becomes us much rather to pity and excuse, than expose them to Ridicule. And we shall not delight to reproach any Man, that is so unhappy as to fall into Sin, if we remember that we are all worthy of Punishment.

Let it, then, suffice a Man to examine himself, and let him leave the Conduct of other Men to be examined by that all-seeing Judge, who beholds all the Actions of Mankind, in one comprehensive View.

We

one on his own Conduct, as he is on That of others, and as candid to their Faults as he is to his own. He that has fewest Faults has constructively none at all, because it is a common Case; But no Man has more Faults, than he that pretends to have none.

We shall have little Leisure (*) to judge our Brother, and still less Inclination to set him at nought, if we make a proper Use of but this one Consideration that "we must all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every One may give an Account, and receive the due Reward of his own Deeds."

Upon the whole, — Let us consider, whether it would do the World, or ourselves any Harm, if that Scandal, that precious Knowledge, of which we are so communicative, should die with us. If it would not do any Harm, then it is one of the first Principles of Morality, not to give others Pain and Uneasiness; not to wound them, either in Mind or Body, without a sufficient Cause, without a Design to compass some valuable End, and take it for granted, whatever Pleasure you may feel in giving Utterance

(*) Our industrious Search and Inquiries should chiefly be employed about our own Affairs at Home; for here we shall find so many Offences in our Conversation, such a Variety of Perturbations in our Souls, and manifest Failures in our Duty, that it will take up so much Time to reform them, as not to leave us any Leisure to be impertinent or ill-natured in remarking upon the Faults of others.

When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionysius*, who would fain have had a famous Philosopher for his Flatterer, they parted in some Unkindness, and *Dionysius* bad him not to speak ill of him, when he returned into Greece; *Plato* told him, "He had no Leisure for it;" meaning, that he had *better* things to mind, than to take up his Time and Thoughts, with talking of the Faults and Defects of so bad a Man, so notoriously known to all the World.

Utterance to ill-natured Suggestions, there is much greater in stifling them. But if out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth must speak; if the Fulness of your Souls impatient to disperse others on every Occasion, upon no Occasion must throw Words, when you are certainly in the Gall of Bitterness and Bond of Iniquity. On the contrary, what Commendations does he deserve, who, at the same Time that he has not much good Sense to think well of the worthless, has not much Charity to speak ill of them, when there is no Necessity for it? What if a Person, who, in the main, has led a good Life, should yet, contrary to the general Tenor of it, be guilty of some unaccountable Wickedness? What should we learn from this? Not certainly some poor Materials for idle Conversation, in which, whatever Expence of Words there may be, there is no Expence at all of Thought: no, it ought to teach us something far more useful and noble, a Lesson of Diffidence of Ourselves, Watchfulness and Circumspection; lest "we, who think we stand, should also be tempted, and fall."

The Miscarriages of a good Man, which give an ill-natured Pleasure to little Minds, suggest to every great Mind, the most melancholy Ideas of the Weakness of human Nature, but no spiteful & venemous

venemous Reflexions against his Weakness in particular? Far from insulting over fallen Worth, he views his Downfall with a generous Pity; and, warned by it, "works out his own Salvation with Fear and Trembling." As when the Young, the blooming, and the vigorous, who had fair for Length of Days, yet pine away, or are cut off by some sudden Sickness; it teaches us to be more temperate and cautious to preserve the Health of the Body: So, when the Good and Virtuous, from whose former Actions we might expect an uninterrupted Course of Piety, are overtaken, (we scarce know how,) in any dishonest and flagrant Vice; This should put us upon our Guard, and make us take all due Precautions to preserve the Health of the Soul.

This is the Use we are to make of these pitiable Instances: They are no Subjects for wanton Merriment, Pleasantry, & witty Spleen; No: but are Subjects for a serious Consideration on our own Frailty, & teach us not to be too languine, or oversecure. — To Conclude,

It is no unusual thing to hear some complaining, that their Abilities to do good, and to abound in Works of Charity, are confined within a narrow Sphere, tho their Inclinations are very large and extensive. — Now,

If

If these Men are in earnest, we can point out one Kind of Charity, which will not be expensive to them, and endear them to their Fellow-creatures. Their Circumstances may not enable them to cherish Merit by their Generosity, and to relieve Distress by their Charity: but the charitable Office is daily in their Power, [viz] to cast in Shades their Neighbour's Misconduct, & to set out, in the most advantageous Point of View, their good Qualities; to lessen their Failings, & to do Justice to their Virtues; to produce an obscure Character into Light, and to rescue an injured One from Obloquy.

"Silver & Gold, they may have little or none, but such as they have, they may give," [viz] what is better than Silver or Gold, a good Name & Reputation to their Neighbours: And, it is in vain to talk of their Desire & Readiness to the former, if it was in their Power, when they are so defective in this latter, which every One can so easily perform; this being the Virtue preferred, by the Apostle, before "our giving our Body to be burned, or all our Goods to feed the Poor."

"Put a Bridle, then, on thy Tongue, and set a Guard before thy Lips, lest the Words of thine own Mouth destroy thy Peace." (*) "Fly

(*) *Vincula da Linguæ, vel tibi Vincula dabit,* Serm. CXVI.

"Fly the Company of those who are given to Detraction; To hear them patiently is criminal, and to show the least Countenance of Encouragement is to partake of their Guilt, and to promote them to a Continuance of it."

"Hear no ill of a Friend; nor speak any of an Enemy: believe not all you hear, nor speak all that you believe."

"Be willing to commend and slow to censure; so shall Praise be upon thy Virtues, and the Eye of Enmity shall be blind to thy Imperfections." For,

"Whosoever speaketh of another's Failings with Pleasure, shall hear of his own with Bitterness of Heart."

"Either speak nothing of the absent, or speak like a Friend."

"Improve rather by other Men's Faults, than censure them:" For,

"Of much speaking cometh Repentance; but in Silence there is Safety."

"A talkative Man is a Nuisance to Society; the Ear is sick of his Babling, the Torrent of his Words overwhelmeth Conversation."

"Boast not of thyself, for it shall bring Contempt upon thee; neither deride another, for it is dangerous."

"A

"A bitter Jest (a) is the Poison of Friendship; and he that cannot refrain his Tongue, shall have Trouble."

(a) *Quid de quoque Viro, et cui dicas, sæpè videto.*
Multa cadunt Inter calicem supremaque Labra.

There is nothing more disagreeable than continual jesting; by endeavouring to purchase the Reputation of being pleasant, Man loses the Advantage of being thought wise. No Injury makes so deep an Impression in our Memory, as that which is done by a cutting malicious Jest, for; let it be ever so good, yet it is always extremely bad when it occasions Enmity. The wounding of a Friend for the sake of a Jest, is an Intemperance and Immorality not to be endured.

Ne turpiter quæras illud.

Some Jests will never be forgiven.

A Sally of Passion is frequently forgiven; but Raillery in cold Blood, which is a Sign of Disesteem, is never pardoned.

"The Man, of all-sufficient Merit,
"With Modesty ne'er damps his Spirit;
"Presumes on his own Parts,
"On all alike his Tongue exerts,
"His noisy Jokes at Random throws,
"And pertly spatters Friends and Foes;
"In Wit and Wine plentifully lavish
"Contributes to their own Disgrace.
"Too late the forward Man shall find
"That Jokes are sometimes paid in kind;
"Or, if they canker in the Breast,
"He makes a Foe, who makes a Jest."

Mirth, out of Season, is a grievous Ill.

Ut cui nocere constitit Discrimen. Erit ubi Pœnas det precax Audacia.

As a Man should never construe that in Earnest, which is spoken in Jest; so he should not speak that in Jest, which may be construed in

"He that can rule his Tongue, shall live without Strife; and he that hateth Babbling, shall have less Evil."

"Censure not thy Neighbour, then, and believe not the Tales of Envy and Malevolence; neither repeat thou their Slanders."

"Rehearse not unto another that which is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare never the worse." (*)

"Whether in Earnest. Let no Jest intrude upon good Manners; especially with a rude Man, lest thy Ancestors be disgraced."

To *Jest* is tollerable, but to do Harm by Jest is insufferable.

Ludo et Joco uti quidem licet, sed sicut Somno et Quieti, tum, cum gravibus seriisque Rebus satis facerimus. — Ut sunt Vices Somni et Vigilia, Noctis et Diei, Procellarum et Tranquillitatis, Belli et Pacis; ita, Labores ferendi, Otio et Lusibus. Quod non erit, Ignis non ab. Cavillatorem illum

Reprove with Gentleness; with Truth commend;
Laugh at a Jest, but laugh not without End.

See Knox's Essays, No. 125. on Buffoonery in Conversation, and No. 249. of the Spectator.

(*) *Sit mihi fas audita loqui.*

What I have heard, permit me to relate.

The Indiscretion of talking too freely of one another, is the Source of those so many Differences which embroil Mankind. Such as, having heard disagreeable Discourses, repeat them again to the Person concerned, are much mistaken if they think to oblige him by those indiscreet Confidences. It grates us to the Heart, to hear a Man who is so imprudent as to tell us to our Faces vexatious things, tho' he only repeats what Others have said of us. — Indeed we are so far from obliging a Man by relating to him the ill things that have been said of Him, that we are quickly paid for our Indiscretion, by becoming the first Object of his Averson and Resentment. When

When we hear any One, therefore, ill-spoken of in our Company, (which happens but too often,) let us not mingle the Poison of our ill-natured Reflections; much less be the Messengers of such Stuff to the Person concerned.

The Carriage of ill News is the daily Cause of infinite Vexations. He that discovers a Transgression, breeds Love; but he that repeats a Matter, separates very Friends. "As where there is no Wood, the Fire goeth out; So, where there is no Tale-bearer, there the Strife ceaseth." — But further,

As we oblige not our Friends by such Sorts of Errands; so (and what is worse,) we infallibly incense the Authors of the Report.

Be cautious, therefore, of believing every Tale; for he that is hasty of Credit, is light-minded: but be yet far more cautious of reporting it; lest, upon a strict Inquiry, it should prove to be a Mistake; & then not only Shame will attend us for our Folly, but our Consciences will accuse us also for the Injustice in it. *Sic eh, dum recitas, incipit esse tuus.* And it is the same to the Sufferer whether the Injury be done by a wise Man, or a Fool: save, that as the former gains the readier Assent, he therefore does the greater Mischief.

Cicero in one of his Pleadings, defending his Client from general Scandal, says very handsomely, and with much Reason, "There are "many who have particular Engagements to the Prosecutor: there "are many who are known to have Ill-will to him for whom I appear: "there are many who are naturally addicted to Defamation, and en-"vious of any Good to any Man, who may have contributed to spread "Reports of this Kind: for nothing is so swift as Scandal, nothing is "more easily sent abroad, nothing received with more Welcome, no-"thing diffuses itself so universally. I shall not desire, that if any Re-"port to our Disadvantage has any Ground for it, you would overlook "or extenuate it: But if there be any thing advanced without a Per-

"if thou hast heard a Word, let it die with thee, and be bold, it shall not burst thee."

"If Malice, Cruelty, or Wantonness obtrude any thing to the Prejudice of another, (like the recording Angel,) blot it out with a Tear: the Approbation of thine own Mind shall amply recompence thee."

"Devise not a Lye against thy Neighbour, seeing he dwelleth securely by thee. Defame him not in his Character; neither bear thou false Witness against him."

"for who can say whence he had it, or which is attested by One who "forgot who told him it, or who had it from One of so little Consideration, that he did not then think it worth his Notice. All such "Testimonies as these, I know you will think too slight to have any "Credit against the Innocence and Honour of your Fellow-citizen."

When an ill Report is traced, it very often vanishes among such as the Orator has here recited. — To take uncertain things for certain, is very foolish. He that credits an evil Report is almost as criminal, as the first Inventer of it. "The Simple believeth every Word, but a prudent Man looketh well to his Going."

Sermon

SERMON CXVII.

Due Christian Conversation stated and enforced; in Opposition to Evil-speaking.

Philip. i. 27. "Only let your Conversation be as "becometh the Gospel of Christ."

The Faculty of interchanging our Thoughts with One another, or what we express by the Word CONVERSATION, has always been represented, by moral Writers, as one of the noblest Privileges of Reason, and which more particularly sets Mankind above the BRUTE Part of the Creation. It is the Band of Society, and by it the useful Commerce of civil Life is kept up; the Mind communicates its Thoughts, and the Heart expresses its Inclinations. It has ever, therefore, been justly esteemed a powerful Instrument of Good or Evil; it has ever had a mighty Influence on the Conduct of human Life, and the Vice and Virtue of the World has ever, in a great Measure been owing to it.

On this Account, we may take Occasion to consider, how common Conversation ought to be regulated, so as to take a profitable and improveable Turn: a Topic this, far from being below the Regard of the Pulpit, since Conversation is what all Mankind run into, as the most agreeable Circumstance of Life, and as Dangers always attend what is agreeable, Conversation abounds with them: the prophane, the dissolute, the uncharitable, do all make their Discourse savour strongly of their particular Dispositions; and thro that natural Proneness which Men bear to Sin, thro' the influence of bad Example

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The Faculty of interchanging our Thoughts by Speech, and the familiar entertaining Light in which Men commonly place their favourite Vices, make us find that Sin insinuates wonderfully by common Discourse, and Men are much more talked into Wickedness, than betrayed into it any other Way. And Dangers in this Respect are more particularly dangerous, because Mischiefs, like Blessings, by being common, become disregarded. Men fall into Conversation, as into an obvious engaging Office, and it is an Affair so much of Course, that they never attend either to its Nature or its Consequences. Its Regulation, therefore, &c. (under)

its Regulation, therefore, hath, in all Ages, demanded the utmost Prudence & Caution; and, the rather,

rather, becauſe there are Perſons, not altogether corrupt, who, out of an Affectation to be entertaining, do now and then allow themſelves Liberties, which are not to be altogether examined ſtrictly by the Rules of the Goſpel, of taking-heed that "our Speech be always with Grace," and of "letting no corrupt Communication come out of our Mouth, but ſuch as may tend to the Uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers."

Not that we are forbid the chearful, innocent Freedoms of Diſcourſe, (*) provided we be wiſe to Sobriety

(*) The chief Purpoſe for which the Faculty of Speech was given to Man, is plainly that we may communicate our Thoughts to each other, in Order to carry on the Affairs of the World; for Buſineſs, and for our Improvement in Knowledge and Learning. But the good Author of our Nature deſigned us not only Neceſſaries, but likewiſe Enjoyment & Satisfaction, in that Being He hath graciouſly given, and in that Condition of Life in which He hath placed us.

There are *ſecondary* Uſes of our Faculties; they adminiſter to Delight, as well as to Neceſſity; and as they are equally adapted to both, there is no Doubt but God intended them for our Gratification, as well as for the Support and Continuance of our Being.

The ſecondary Uſe of Speech is to pleaſe and be entertaining to each other in Converſation. This is, in every Reſpect, allowable and right: It unites Men cloſer in Alliances and Friendſhips; gives us a Fellow-feeling of the Proſperity and Happineſs of each other; and is, in ſeveral Reſpects, ſerviceable to Virtue, and to promote good Behaviour in the World. (See the Extenſiveneſs of this Faculty in Note (2) Page 290. &c.) And provided there be not too much Time ſpent in it,

Sobriety, and give way to no such Evil Communications, as naturally, tho perhaps undesignedly tend to corrupt good Manners. — But, it

it, if it were considered only in the Way of Gratification and Delight, Man must have strange Notions of God and Religion, to think that He can be offended with our social Converse, or that it is any Way inconsistent with the strictest Virtue. But the Truth is, such sort of Conversation, tho it has no particular good Tendency, yet in the general good One: it is social and friendly, and tends to promote Humanity, Good-nature and Civility, &c. indeed.

The innocent Delights of Conversation and pleasurable Entertainments of Discourse are themselves a great Field of Virtue, and an Exercise and Occasion of many Instances of Obedience, because in it, we may only die to the Exercise in our own Persons, and be Examples to others of much Courtesy and Kindness, Civility and Condescension, Affability and Oblidgingness.

Let no Man, then, think that his Hours of common Conversation are lost, and that whatever Time he spends in Offices of Civility, and innocent Freedom in Company, is misapplied, and stolen from God & Religion; for we are fulfilling God's Laws, while, as Occasion requires, we keep all the Commandments in the pleasurable Entertainments of common Life: they are such as God hath appointed us, and our obedient Performance of them, be a Part of our Service, (as He hath made us sociable Creatures) as well as Devout, holy Conference and devout Meditation.

It is no Prejudice to Religion, to be free & open in Conversation, and pleasant and chearful in common Life; but rather an Instance and Expression of it. - It is no Part of any Man's Duty to be always talking in Scripture-phrase & sanctified Expressions, or else to be wholly silent, and severely morose; for an innocent Chearfulness and Freedom of Discourse, is not so truly the good Man's Sin, as the Exercise of his Virtue and Obedience.

(Serm. CXVII.) Conversation

It would render a Diſcourſe too diffuſive to treat of Converſation in the large Senſe here intended by the Apoſtle, with Regard to the Duties of ſocial Life in general.

I ſhall, therefore, wholly apply myſelf to the Conſideration of it in a confined Senſe, as, in Diſcharge of the Duties we owe to Society, it reſpects the Government of the Tongue, whether in Mildneſs, Charity, or Chriſtian Benevolence. — And,

Firſt, What is, in the loweſt Senſe, to be underſtood by Mildneſs, is, ſuch a Manner of correſponding with others, as thereby to give no reaſonable Cauſe of Offence to any Man, how remote ſoever it may appear.

Mildneſs, eſpecially in Conjunction with other ſocial Qualities, has great Advantages, conſidered merely as a human Virtue. (*) Nothing

(*) Converſation ſeems not only ordained to be the Cement of Society, but the greateſt Conſolation to reaſonable Creatures. Study is the moſt ſolid Nouriſhment of the Mind, and the Source of its moſt noble Acquiſitions. Study increaſes our natural Talent; but it is Converſation that ſets it on Work, and refines it. It is more pleaſing and animating than Reading or Obſervation, which, though very uſeful, are but dull and tireſome without Converſation. It gives us the Knowledge of Men and the World, which reading alone can never give: a Man may be a great Scholar by ſtudying Books, but his Learning will be of little Uſe, unleſs he keeps good Company and freely converſes. It is of great Uſe to underſtand what we read, and to have our Doubts ſatisfied. Books cannot explain themſelves; [under]

Nothing tends more to gain upon the Affections of

We ſee many, that, by this Art only, ſpend their Days in the midſt of Careſſes, Invitations, and Civilities; and, without any extraordinary Qualities or Attainments, are the univerſal Favourites of Fortune, and certainly find a Friend in every Face.

The Darlings of the World will, indeed, be generally found ſuch as excite neither Jealouſy nor Fear; and are not conſidered as Candidates for any eminent Degree of Reputation, but content themſelves with common Accompliſhments, & endeavour rather to ſolliciot Kindneſs, than to raiſe Eſteem: In Proof of which we find, that, in Places of Reſort, it ſeldom fails to happen, that tho' at the Entrance of ſome particular Perſon, every Face brightens with Gladneſs, & every Hand is extended in Salutation; yet, if we purſue him beyond the firſt Exchange of Civilities, we ſhall find him of very ſmall Importance, and only admitted to the Company, as one by whom all conceive their Hours to be alleviated, and with whom any One has no Scruple to amuſe himſelf when he can find no other Auditor or Companion; as One with whom all are at Eaſe, who will hear a Jeſt without Criticiſm, and allow a Narrative without Contradiction; who laughs at all every Wit, and yields to every Diſputer. — We are moſt inclined to love when we have nothing to fear; and he that encourages us to plume ourſelves, will not be long without Preference in our Affections for them.

If therefore we deſire to pleaſe, we ſhould never ſpeak to gratify any particular Vanity or Paſſion of our own, (ſee the latter Part of No. 316 of the Spectator,) but always with a Deſign either innocently to divert or inform the Company: A Man who only aims at One of theſe, is always eaſy in his Diſcourſe; he obſerves the Humours of Others, and ſuits his own Carriage to them; by which Inſinuation he makes their Converſe more free and open: his Diſcourſe is more in Queries and Doubtings, than in peremptory Aſſertions & Diſputings.

A too great Deſire of outſhining and dazzelling others, renders Converſation diſagreeable. We are willing, at any Rate, to give a great Idea of our Merit; this Deſire puts us upon a Flow of Talk, without

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ſelves; but it is a great Advantage to have ſome judicious Friends who are able and willing to explain and illuſtrate what we wiſh to know more clearly in an Author. It brings into Exerciſe the Powers of the Mind. By mutual Diſcourſe we not only give and receive Benefit and Pleaſure, but the Mind being brought into Action, unfolds and increaſes its Stock of Knowledge.

(*) It is well known that the moſt certain Way to give others Pleaſure, is to perſuade them that we receive Pleaſure from them, to encourage them to Freedom and Confidence, and to avoid any ſuch Appearance of Superiority, as may overbear and oppreſs them.

(*Non bene conveniunt, nec in una Sede morantur*
Majeſtas et Amor. ——— ——— ——) We

Nothing tends more to gain upon the Affections of

We see many, that, by this Art only, spend their Days in the midst of Caresses, Invitations, and Civilities; and, without any extraordinary Qualities or Attainments, are the universal Favourites of Fortune, and certainly find a Friend in every Face.

The Darlings of the World will, indeed, be generally found such as excite neither Jealousy nor Fear, and are not considered as Candidates for any eminent Degree of Reputation, but content themselves with common Accomplishments, & endeavour rather to solliciat Kindness, than to raise Esteem: In Proof of which we find, that, in Places of Resort, it seldom fails to happen, that tho' at the Entrance of some particular Person, every Face brightens with Gladness, & every Hand is extended in Salutation; yet, if we pursue him beyond the first Exchange of Civilities, we shall find him of very small Importance, and only useful to the Company, as every body shall conceive themselves to be entertained, and with whom any One is at Liberty to amuse himself when he can find no other Auditor or Companion; as One with whom all are at Ease, who will hear a Jest without Criticism, and a narrative without Contradiction, who laughs with every Wit, and yields to every Disputer. — We are apt to be kind to those when we have nothing to fear, and he that encourages us to please ourselves, will not be long without Preference in our Affections or Esteem.

If therefore we desire to please, we should never speak to gratify any particular Vanity or Passion of our own, (see the latter Part of No. 16 of the Spectator,) but always with a Design either innocently to divert or inform the Company: A Man who only aims at One of these, is always easy in his Discourse; He observes the Humours of Others, and suits his own Carriage to them; by which Insinuation he makes their Converse more free and open: his Discourse is more in Queries and Doubtings, than in peremptory Assertions & Disputings.

A too great Desire of outshining and dazzelling others, renders Conversation disagreeable. We are willing, at any Rate, to give a great Idea of our Merit; this Desire puts us upon a Flow of Talk, without

of Men, and open an Acceſs to their Hearts; and by this Means, to gratify that invincible Inclination which almoſt every Man has of being beloved by others. — But,

Tho' human Motives, in Perſons who have had the Advantage of Education, will go a great Way towards regulating the Temper with Regard to the Duty here mentioned; yet, however, we ſhall do well to ſtrengthen thoſe Motives by Arguments drawn from the Genius and Precepts of our holy Religion.

Mildneſs giving others the Leiſure or Opportunity to exert their ſmall Talents; and ſo, they depart ſoured and provoked againſt thoſe who have thus kept them in Amuſement.

It is an unpardonable Incivility to interrupt a Perſon in his Diſcourſe; it is much better to let him fail in ſome Circumſtances of the Hiſtory, than to rectify him, (if he aſks not your Advice,) or to ſignify that we knew long before, the News he would acquaint us with. To what Purpoſe is it to refuſe a Man the Pleaſure of believing he informed us of ſomething we were ignorant of before? It is ungenerous to give a Man Occaſion to bluſh at his own Ignorance in one thing, who, perhaps, may excell us in many. He that is truly polite, knows how to contradict with Reſpect, and to pleaſe without Adulation, and is equally remote from an inſipid Complaiſance, and a low Familiarity. A Man of this Temper will not only himſelf be generally beloved by the wiſe and generous, but he will alſo be almoſt Proof againſt the moſt malicious Detractors; they will be afraid of One ſo fortified in the publick Eſteem; the Charms of Kindneſs and Affability are irreſiſtible; they conquer, captivate, and return in Triumph over the Affections of all Men.

Meekness and Humility, Qualities inſeparable, and above all others oppoſite to an arrogant and aſſuming Air in Converſation, are not to be conſidered merely as Ornaments of civil Life, but alſo as Graces of the Chriſtian. (*)

No Syſtem of Philoſophy ever explained the Nature of theſe Duties ſo well, or carried the Notion of them ſo high, as the Goſpel of Chriſt; much leſs was the Practice of them ever recommended after ſo powerful and perſuaſive a Manner as by the Rules of it. — But,

Notwithſtanding the Principles of Chriſtianity are very clear on this Head, yet, it may be queſtioned, whether there are not Chriſtians who imagine, on the one Hand, that as a haughty and commanding Air of Converſation is an Argument of

(*) It is undoubtedly true, that ſome Man's Mind is capable of thinking ſtrongly in the Preſence of One whom he fears and reverences, as he is when that Reſtraint is taken off: & this is to be found not only in weighty Matters, but alſo in the Arts of Diſcourſe and Raillery themſelves, for we have often ſeen Men of bold Tempers, that have over-awed and governed the Wit of moſt Companies, to have been diſturbed, dumb, and baffled, when Some Other has been preſent, who uſed to put them down. Such a Kind of natural Sovereignty there is in ſome Men's Minds over Others, which muſt needs be much greater, when it is advanced by long Uſe, and the venerable Name of Maſter, Guardian only, & Humility can ſoften this natural Superiority.

of Magnanimity; ſo, on the other, for a Man to be always of a condeſcending and ſubmiſſive Temper is a Sign that he really wants Spirit.

I ſhall not take upon me here to ſhew particularly how unjuſtly both theſe Prejudices are grounded, but content myſelf with obſerving, that GREAT Minds, as they are moſt cautious of giving Provocation, are always moſt difficultly provoked; and that the calm and ſedate have ever been reputed, and with great Reaſon, as poſſeſſing the trueſt Courage. (*)

"Who is a wiſe Man, then, and endued with Knowledge; let him ſhew, out of a good Converſation, his Works with Meekneſs and Wiſdom."

Above all, we ſhould be careful to avoid too much Familiarity in Converſation; For, he that familiarizeth himſelf preſently, looſeth the Superiority that his ſerious Air and grave Deportment gave him; and conſequently his Credit. (†)

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(*) True Bravery is ſedate and inoffenſive: If it refuſe to ſubmit to Inſults, it offers none; it begins no Diſputes, nor enters into any needleſs Quarrels; it is above the little troubleſome Ambition to be diſtinguiſhed every Moment; it hears in Silence, and replies with Modeſty; fearing no Enemy, and making none; and is as much aſhamed of Inſolence, as of Cowardice.

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rior

The more common human things are, the less they are esteemed; for Communication discovers Imperfections that a prudent Reserve concealed. (*)

There

rior to us by their Quality and Station, Employ or Age, in a familiar Way. - Familiarity is not sufferable but among Equals: and tho' People themselves waive their Privileges, yet we must not forget our Duty, and treat them otherwise, than their Characters demand. — Liberties of this Kind bespeak a sordid Education, & perfect Ignorance of Decorum.

— Be not easily exceptious, nor unduly familiar, the One will breed Contention; the Other, Contempt. — We may be courteous and sweet, without too much Familiarity. — Indeed,

There is nothing more difficult in common Behaviour than to [illegible] to Familiarity; too little, implies Unfriendliness, and too much destroys friendly & social Intercourse. The best Rule is never to be more familiar with any one, than you would be willing, and even wish, that he should be with you. On the other Hand, as carefully avoid that uncomfortable Reserve and Coldness, which is generally the Shield of Cunning, or the Protection of Dulness.

— Familiarity in Inferiors, is Sauciness; in Superiors, Condescen-

There are various Motives for some Persons being silent, which are not good, such as a cowardly Fear of defending Truth, or an absent Friend, or else a sly selfish Disposition, or perhaps Pride and Ill-nature. Besides if most Persons were silent in Company, there would be very little Pleasure or Edification in Society, Conversation would be flat and insipid, and consequently one of the greatest Comforts of Life almost cut off. — Upon the whole,

Taciturnity is neither amiable nor justifiable, except in some particular Persons or Cases, and in some particular Companies in which Prudence must ever dictate the proper Behaviour.

Silence in Company, if not thro' Dulness, Affectation or Modesty, thro' Melancholy, Sullenness or, &c. [next Page]

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Familiarity in Inferiors, is Sauciness; in Superiors, Condescension. It is very hard to hit a certain Temper and Mediocrity of Freedom with Persons above us, so to be easy and plain with them, as to become an Instrument of their Entertainment, without being any Way offensive, or breaking in upon the Honour and Respect due to their Quality.

(*) *Ut quod se caligare, et affinis dictum, minus admiratur: Ita, qui minus libere Conversantium animos, minoris æstimatur. — Ut Trabs, Ramorum Nexus Explicat: in quem insultant pueri, Lusitant, et Conscendunt: Ita, nimia Familiaritas quotidiana Conversatione, Negotium parit ac Contemptum; Raritas autem Admirationem conciliat.*

As much is said in Scripture, as well as by the Ancients, in Favour of Silence, it is certain that it must in some Cases be highly proper [v]. First, for young Persons, as they are unexperienced, and generally too forward; it becomes them (and especially when in Company with their Elders) either to be almost silent, or with great Modesty to propose their Doubts and Questions. Sdly, It is proper for Persons of little Experience; such having seen or read little should say but little, until their Stock of Knowledge is considerably increased. Lastly, It is also very proper for all (and even the wisest) in mixed Company. It is certainly very impudent to speak freely in all Sorts of Company; a Reserve in such a Case is therefore necessary if we would preserve Peace and our own Reputation.

But if we consider that Taciturnity is sometimes the Effect of Dulness or Conceit, it may admit of some Doubt whether it is worthy of so much Praise as is commonly bestowed on it. There

There are many ſhining Qualities in the Minds of Men, but there is none ſo uſeful as Diſcretion. It is This, indeed, which gives a Value to all the reſt, and appoints them their proper Times and Places, and turns them to the Advantage of the Perſon who is poſſeſſed of them.

If we look into particular Communities and Diviſions of Men, we may obſerve that it is the DISCREET Man, not the witty, nor the learned, nor the brave, who guides the Converſation and gives Meaſures to the Society.

In all your Converſation, therefore, be cautious what you ſpeak, and to whom; how you ſpeak, and when; what you ſpeak, ſpeak truly; and when you ſpeak, thro Melancholy, Sullenneſs or Auſterity, (which are ſeldom beloved) is Obſervation and Diſcretion.

By Silence we have this Advantage, we obſerve other Men's Follies and conceal our own. — There is no Man who talketh, if you be wiſe, but you may gain from him; and none that is ſilent, if you have not a Care, but you may loſe by him. *Sermo eſt Index Animi: et quoſtibi aliquid aut dictum aut loquimur, tales de nobis judicatur. Ingenium Hominis non tàm in Vultu relucet, quàm in Orationo; quòd hoc ſit certiſſimum, minimè mendax Animi Spectaculum.* "Even a Fool, when he holdeth his Peace, is counted wiſe; and he that ſhutteth his Lips, is eſteemed a Man of Underſtanding." And, It is as great a Point of Wiſdom to hide Ignorance, as it is to diſcover Knowledge. By Diſcretion, the Vicious preſerve their Honour; and without it, the Virtuous loſe it. — What is often termed Shyneſs, is nothing leſs than refined Senſe, and an Indifference to common Obſervations.

Speak, speak with Ly; A Fool's Heart is in his Tongue; (*) but a wise Man's Tongue is in his Heart."

(*) Discretion is an admirable Veil to hide manifest Imperfections, and a politick Silence screens those unperceived Weaknesses, which are betrayed by the silly Discourses that escape, (see No. 225. of the Spectator,) we ought to be very cautious of talking before the Judicious, lest we tread awry. A grave and mysterious Air may at least make it probable, that we are skilled in the Business treated on, and give us an Appearance of Worth.—It is uncertain whether of the two Faults is most blamable in a young Man, [viz.] Acting Thoroughness, attended with a sleepish and awkward Look, which keeps him from opening his Mouth; Or an impudent Presumption, that defies with a Jaunt, a Cravat, Right or Wrong, attacks the Conduct of all the World, vents a thousand Fooleries, and then carelessly shrugs for them, (see No. 20. of the Spectator,) both are equally foolish, but it is easier to endure the Silence of the One, than the Frothiness and Vanity of the Other. Some are so slow of Speech, and so very dull, that their Heads may not unfitly be compared to a Limbeck, which gives you drop by drop an Extract of the Simples in it, (see No. 371. of the Spectator.) Young Men that come first upon the Stage of the World, ought either to be very modest, or very brisk; for a sober, grave, and composed Temper [illegible] to be impertinent. *Nimia Verecundia invereundum facit.*

Too much Modesty is an bad an Ornament, (see No. 484. of the Spectator,) That Silence, that Fools, is not [illegible] the Mark of a wise Man; yet Bashfulness and Imperfections certainly disbode the Fool. [illegible] *Natura quid poscat, quid non, ea sola videt, non plura requirit; Aut si ostentat, aut eorum quibuscum est Rationem habuisse, ea magna est Arrogantia.* Silence is [illegible] Eloquence; for Fools in their Dumbness are accounted wise. *Vacuitatis inane Homini pro Sapientia est; tacere qui nescit, non loqui. Ut nemo bene dicit, ita Silentio ignavi Stultitiæ.* He can never speak well, who can never hold his Peace.

Heart." In all your Discourse, therefore, consider

"There is One that keepeth Silence, and is found wise; and Another by much Babling becometh hatefull." "Some Man holdeth his Tongue, because he hath not to answer; and some keepeth Silence, knowing his Time." "A wise Man will hold his Tongue, till he see Opportunity; but a Babler and a Fool will regard no Time." "He that useth many Words shall be abhorred, and he that taketh to himself Authority therein, shall be hated."

"Wisdom resteth in the Heart of him that hath Understanding; but that which is in the midst of Fools is made known." "He that hath Knowledge, spareth his Words."

It is One thing to speak much, and Another to speak well.

Much Tongue, and much Judgment seldom go together; for talk, and thinking are two different Faculties; and there is commonly more Depth, where there is less Noise. *Ut Cicuta inania maxime tinnunt; Ita quibus minimum inest Mentis, ii sunt loquacissimi.*

Quiet, speaking Folly.

Nec unquam magniloquus, Sapiens.

Empty Vessels sound loudest.

It happens with Men of Learning as to Ears of Corn, they shoot up, and raise their Heads high, while they are empty; but when full and swelled with Grain, they begin to sink and droop.

A little Learning is a dang'rous Thing

Drink deep, or taste not the *Pierian* Spring.

These shallow Draughts intoxicate the Brain;
But drinking largely, sobers us again.

See the latter Part of Novem. of the Spectator.

"Seest thou a Man, then, that is hasty in his Speech, there is more Hope of a Fool than of him." "Silence is the highest Wisdom of a Fool, as Speech and Reason are the greatest Trial of a wise Man." "As the Fruit declareth if the Tree have been dressed, so is the Utterance of a Conceit in the Heart of Man." "Praise no Man, therefore, before thou hast heard him speak; for this is the Trial of Men."

Serm. CXVII.

We

before you speak once; and you will speak ever the better for it. Let us — let a Watch be-

We shall never be thought to talk too much, when we speak well; and always too much, when we speak ill. — *Multiloquium non effugit peccatum* (*) *Sapiens, tacet, aut ubi Res exigit, loquitur; et paucissimis fatuus effugit Animadversionem, Silentium, aside Negligentiæ flagitante, loquendi Finem non facit.* — Some have Silence for Want of Matter or Assurance, while Others are talkative for Want of Sense. And it is a sad thing when Men have neither Wit enough to speak well, nor Sense enough to hold their Peace. This is the Foundation of all Impertinence. — A facetious Fool may have entertaining Follies to divert for a Time, but nothing so troublesome as a serious One. Ink, and Salt, and a Mask of Iron, is easier to bear than a Man without Understanding.

Impertinence at first is born
With scarlet slight and smiles of Scorn;
Tease it into Wrath, what Patience bears
The noisy Fool that perseveres?

Impertinence, either in *Writing* or *Discourse*, is intollerable; for, tho Rime be but a Jingle, yet it affords Delight by the Musicalness of its Cadences. But, when wanting of both Rime and Reason, it neither delights the Senses, nor improves the Understanding.

If, therefore, we abound not in Reason, it is a holly Folly to think of pleasing by Rime, if not naturally born to it; for, tho Art be taught by Art; yet *Poetry* is the Gift of God. *Poeta nascitur, non fit.* — In a Word,

A great Talker will always speak, tho' no one minds him; nor does he mind any one, while they speak to him.

A

It is the Part of a Blockhead to be troublesome, a Man of Wit and Sense is sensible when his Company is agreeable or not, and dispenses with Himself before the Time when his Visit might be accounted

(*) See Note (*) Page 221.

fore the Door of our Lips;" and not ſpeak, but upon Conſideration. We do not mean to ſpeak FINELY, but FITLY; (*) or, that we ſhould be moroſely ſilent (†) and ſullen in Company; or, ſo ſtiff in Converſation, as to drop nothing but Aphoriſms and Oracles; eſpecially among Friends and Equals, where an innocent and open Freedom is expected.

If a Man had the Underſtanding of an Angel, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of his Exceſs of Wiſdom, in Order to be tollerably becoming to all Men. (‡) All

(*) What is Art and Artifice compared with Simplicity? What are all the Refinements of the moſt populous Cities when put in Competition with the rural Beauties of Nature? What are all the ſtudied Rules of Politeneſs compared with the hearty and affectionate Behaviour of real friends? And what is artificial Beauty when contraſted with the Looks of blooming Innocence. We may alſo add, what are all the fine, but falſe Modes of conducting Buſineſs by [under]

(†) Some Men, by every Muſcle in their Face, diſcover their Thoughts to be fixed upon the Conſideration what Figure they are to make, and will often fall into a *muſing* Poſture to attract Obſervation, and are then obtruding themſelves upon the Company, when they pretend to be withdrawn from it; (ſee No. 77 of the Spectator,) ſuch little Arts are the certain and infallible Tokens of ſuperficial Minds, as the avoiding Obſervation is the Sign of great and ſublime Ones.

(‡) He that would please in Company, muſt be attentive to what Style is moſt proper. The *ſublime* ſhould never be uſed but in a learn'd Company of learned Men. The *didactic* ſhould ſeldom be uſed, and then only by judicious aged Perſons, or thoſe who are eminent for Piety or Wiſdom. No Style is more extenſively acceptable than the *narrative*, becauſe this does not carry an Air of Superiority over the reſt of the Company, and therefore is moſt likely to please them; for this Purpoſe we muſt ſtore our Memory with ſhort Anecdotes and entertaining Pieces of Hiſtory. Almoſt [under] every

All that is meant by this Caution, is, that we should never have the Appearance of Study and Elaborateneſs; it is a Pedantry that deſerves not the Benefit of Pardon; for, unleſs our Speech be adapted to the Company we converſe with, tho' it be never ſo elaborate, it will rather confound, than edify.

To each Man's Calling due Reſpect be ſhown,
Nor e'er contrive to make your Learning known.

It is a contemptible Pedantry, and a ridiculous Affectation, to aſſume, on all Occaſions, a Formality of Countenance and Manner, that announces inſtantly to proclaim, we are profound, learned, or ſkilful. The Man looks monſtrous that talks about like a walking Library, and is for ſpouting his *Pagan* Quotations in every Company. This ſtupid and Oſtentation of Learning, it is plain, muſt be an Inſult on the Ignorance of thoſe, when the Party is to oppoſed with its Vapours) muſt be equal to the Capacity. No Man ſhould appear like a Inquiſition on his Neighbour's Parts; but be content to communicate his Ideas of things without aſſuming an Air of Superiority over the Perſon to whom he communicates them.

It is, perhaps, ſtill more abſurd to ſhew, by the peculiar Phraſeology of our Diſcourſe the Nature of our Employment. (ſee No. 257. of the Spectator.)

A prudent Man will avoid talking much of any particular Science or Art of which he is remarkably famous: Beſides the Decency of the Rule, it is certainly founded on good Policy. A Man who talks of any thing he is already famous for, has little to get, but a great deal to loſe; the more it ſometimes ſhews of a Subject whole every One is ſatisfied he could ſpeak well, will often be thought no leſs knowing in other Matters, where perhaps he is wholly ignorant.

Nevertheleſs, we ſhould not ſo far throw off the Appearance of the Station we occupy, as to cauſe it to be imagined that we have quite forgot it: We ſhould remember that there is a Propriety exactly ſuited to each Situation, and to which we ſhould always adhere. We might illuſtrate this Point in a Variety of Inſtances; but the Decorum

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ly ſome in Trade, when compared with the open, artleſs, plain Dealings of an honeſt Man. In ſhort, although Vulgarity and Awkwardneſs are by no Means pleaſing to Perſons of Senſe and Education, yet even they would rather be intimate with ſuch unpoliſhed Perſons who have Simplicity and Sincerity, than with thoſe who are the moſt polite, but act with Duplicity. *Fine* Senſe, and *exalted* Senſe, are not half ſo uſeful as *common* Senſe. &c. [under]

Senſe. There is in Eloquence, a certain Simplicity which ſurpaſſes all Ornament, and the more ſimple any Diſcourſe is, the more true, noble and magnificent will it appear, like thoſe uncultivated Places, which Nature has ſo much enriched by their Situation, as to allow no Room for additional Beauties and Improvements.

Sæpè etiàm eſt Olitor valdè opportunè locutus.

Interdùm Vulgus rectùm judicat.

(‡) Some Men, by every Muſcle in their Face, diſcover their Thoughts to be fixed upon the Conſideration what Figure they are to make, and will often fall into a *muſing* Poſture to attract Obſervation, and are then obtruding themſelves upon the Company, when they pretend to be withdrawn from it: (ſee No. 77 of the Spectator,) ſuch little Arts are the certain and infallible Tokens of ſuperficial Minds, as the avoiding Obſervation is the Sign of great and ſublime Ones.

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To each Man's Calling due Reſpect be ſhown,
Nor be it counted to make your Learning known.

It is a contemptible Pedantry, and a ridiculous Affectation, to affect, on all Occaſions, a Formality of Countenance and Manner, that would inſtantly ſo proclaim, we are profound, learned, or skilful. The Man looks abſurdly that ſtalks about like a walking Library, and is for ſpouting his Pagan Quotations in every Company: This is rude and Crudity of Learning: It is ſtill, there muſt be an Inſinuation of Knowledge, when the Party is to be preſſed with its Vapours: Nothing ſhould be equal to the Capacity. No Man ſhould appear like an Inquiſition on his Neighbour's Parts; but be content to communicate his Ideas of things without aſſuming an Air of Superiority over the Perſon to whom he communicates them.

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A prudent Man will avoid talking much of any particular Science or Art of which he is remarkably famous: beſides the Decency of the Rule, it is certainly founded on good Policy. A Man who talks of any thing he is already famous for, has little to get, but a great deal to loſe; for he is ſometimes ſtarted on a Subject where every One is ſurpriſed he could ſpeak well, will often be thought no leſs knowing in other Matters, where perhaps he is wholly ignorant.

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every One liſtens with Eagerneſs to extemporary Hiſtory. Vanity often co-operates with Curioſity, for he that is an Hearer in one Place, wiſhes to qualify himſelf to be a principal Speaker in ſome inferior Company, and therefore more Attention is given to Narrations than any thing elſe in Converſation. It is true indeed, that Sallies of Wit and quick Replies are very pleaſing in Converſation, but they frequently tend to raiſe Envy in ſome of the Company, but the narrative Way neither raiſes this, nor any other evil Paſſion, but keeps all the Company nearly upon an Equality, and is

(†) There is one Unhappineſs in mixed Converſation, which reigns too much in all Companies, [viz] an Affectation of being reputed Orators, and ſpeaking above the Pitch of Comprehenſion: Whereas, The beſt Art of Speech ſhews itſelf under a natural Dreſs. Our Diſ-

courſe

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neceſſary to different Ages, Sexes, Circumſtances, and Profeſſions, has often been conſidered, and the Defects in them as often expoſed.

A meer Courtier, a meer Soldier, a meer Scholar, a meer any thing, is equally ridiculous. (See No. 105, of the Spectator.)

All great Expreſſions, without great Thoughts to ſupport them, like Ships without Ballaſt, float upon the Surface, and cannot poiſe themſelves to a ſteady Courſe. Such Words as SYMPATHY, *Occult* QUALITIES, and a thouſand more of the ſame Stamp, have no Senſe or Signification at all. (See No. 165. of the Spectator.) A Man is wonderfully deceived, if he fancies himſelf one Jot the wiſer for them. They were only found out to ſupply the Want of Reaſon, and to be uſed when *we* would fain ſay ſomething, but indeed have nothing to ſay. — *Superbiloquentia ſuas deridendo.* — At beſt.

Frivolous Criticiſms in Words, though it is a Part of the Buſineſs of a School, is too pedantick and low for a generous Converſe; while He that is well grown in Knowledge, may perhaps forget, or not in much reſpect, the *firſt* Rudiments of Letters; it being more grateful to the Mind to contemplate the Structures of Learning, as they ſtand finiſhed and adorned, than to diſcuſs the low Materials of their Foundation. — *Tam Vitæ, quam Scholæ diſcere neceſſe eſt.* We muſt learn Things uſeful to our Conduct, as well as to diſpute methodically. In a Word, A nice Obſervation of Rules, is a Confinement which a great Genius cannot bear; it naturally covets Liberty.

It is Liberty alone which inſpires Men with lofty Thoughts, and elevates their Souls to a higher Pitch than Rules of Art can direct.

Books of Rhetorick make Men copious and methodical; but they alone can never infuſe true enthuſiaſtick Rage, which Liberty breaths into their Souls who enjoy it, and which, guided by a ſedate Judgment, will carry Men further than the greateſt Induſtry, and the quickeſt Rules can go without it. Rambling Wits, therefore, ought to be indulged, becauſe by their Conjectures on all Subjects, they have in every Age farther enriched the World, than ſolider Underſtandings.

Plurality

Others. And to this End, we ſhould endeavour to get our Minds furniſhed with Matter of Diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others; and, if we have but a Mind wife & good enough, we ſhall eaſily find a Field amongſt all the Range of Beings, ſufficiently large for innocent Converſation, ſuch as will be harmleſs and acceptable to the better and wiſer Part of Mankind, without condeſcending to mean and baſe things, which are no leſs the Shame than Infelicity of but too many. (*) The

Plurality of Parts, without Order, has a more ſtrong Operation, becauſe it has a ſeeming Infinity, and ſo hinders Comprehenſion.

The Productions of a great Genius, with many Lapſes and Inadvertences, are infinitely preferable to the Works of an inferior Kind of Author, which are ſcrupulouſly exact, and conformable to the Rules of correct Writing. (See No. 592. of the Spectator.)

True Eloquence is good Senſe, delivered in a natural and unaffected Way, without the artificial Ornaments of Tropes and Figures. Our common Eloquence is uſually a Cheat upon the Underſtanding; it deceives us with Appearances inſtead of Things, and makes us think we ſee Reaſon, whilſt it only ſooths the Fancy. Good-nature is more agreeable in Converſation than Wit; and gives a certain Air to the Countenance which is more amiable than Beauty.

(*) The being ſometimes aſtonder, heightens Converſation. Moſt Meats require Sauce, but All an Appetite. *Nihil ſine Varietate grate perpetuum. Varietas in omni Re deleſtat. Nihil tam dulce, quod non pariat Satietatem, niſi Varietate condiatur. In nova fert Animus.* Variety is the Happineſs of Life. Many are ſo fond of Novelty that they would almoſt leave *Paradiſe* to wander in a *Deſert* ſo as to enjoy it. Novelty has Charms that our Minds can hardly withſtand; the moſt valuable Perſons or Things, if they have for a *long* While appeared amongſt us, do not make that Impreſſion which they did at *firſt*, or which *very* inferior Perſons or Things that are *quite* new do. Perhaps it is

[under]

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neceſſary to different Ages, Sexes, Circumſtances, and Profeſſions, has often been conſidered, and the Defects in them as often expoſed.

A meer Courtier, a meer Soldier, a meer Scholar, a meer any thing, is equally ridiculous. (See No. 105. of the Spectator.)

All great Expreſſions, without great Thoughts to ſupport them, like Ships without Ballaſt, float upon the Surface, and cannot poiſe themſelves to a ſteady Courſe. Such Words as SYMPATHY, Occult QUALITIES, and a thouſand more of the ſame Stamp, have no Senſe or Signification at all. (See No. 165. of the Spectator.) A Man is wonderfully deceived, if he fancies himſelf one Jot the wiſer for them. They were only found out to ſupply the Want of Reaſon, and to be uſed when we would fain ſay ſomething, but indeed have nothing to ſay. — *Superbiloquentia ſunt deridenda.* — At beſt,

Frivolous Criticiſms in Words, though it is a Part of the Buſineſs of a School, is too pedantick and low for a generous Converſe; while He that is well grown in Knowledge, may perhaps forget, or not of much reſpect, the *firſt* Rudiments of Letters; it being more grateful to the Mind to contemplate the Structures of Learning, as they ſtand finiſhed and adorned, than to diſcuſs the low Materials of their Foundation. — *Tam Vitæ, quam Scholæ diſcere neceſſe eſt.* We muſt learn Things uſeful to our Conduct, as well as to diſpute methodically. In a Word, A nice Obſervation of Rules, is a Confinement which a great Genius cannot bear; it naturally covets Liberty.

It is Liberty alone which inſpires Men with lofty Thoughts, and elevates their Souls to a higher Pitch than Rules of Art can direct.

Books of Rhetorick make Men copious and methodical, but they alone can never infuſe true enthuſiaſtick Rage, which Liberty breaths into their Souls who enjoy it, and which, guided by a ſedate Judgment, will carry Men further than the greateſt Induſtry, and the quickeſt Rules can go without it. Rambling Wits, therefore, ought to be indulged, becauſe by their Conjectures on all Subjects, they have in every Age farther enriched the World, than ſolider Underſtandings.

Plurality

Others. And to this End, we ſhould endeavour to get our Minds furniſhed with Matter of Diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others; and, if we have but a Mind wife & good enough, we ſhall eaſily find a Field amongſt all the Range of Beings, ſufficiently large for innocent Converſation, ſuch as will be harmleſs and acceptable to the better and wiſer Part of Mankind, without condeſcending to mean and baſe things, which are no leſs the Shame than Infelicity of but too many. (*) The

(*) The Plurality of Parts, without Order, has a more ſtrong Operation, becauſe it has a ſeeming Infinity, and ſo hinders Comprehenſion.

The Productions of a great Genius, with many Lapſes and Inadvertences, are infinitely preferable to the Works of an inferior Kind of Author, which are ſcrupulouſly exact, and conformable to the Rules of correct Writing. (See No. 592. of the Spectator.)

True Eloquence is good Senſe, delivered in a natural and unaffected Way, without the artificial Ornaments of Tropes and Figures. Our common Eloquence is uſually a Cheat upon the Underſtanding; it deceives us with Appearances inſtead of Things, and makes us think we ſee Reaſon, whilſt it only ſooths the Fancy. Good-nature is more a Part of our *natural Depravity* that we ſhould thus *unjuſtly* ſlight what is common tho *truly* excellent; or perhaps it is permitted in Order to ſhow us that this is an *imperfect* State, and we ſhall be never ſatisfied till we come to Heaven. — The continual Society of even the beſt of Men, &c. [under]

The continual Society of even the beſt of Men becomes at length tireſome or inſenſible; which makes thoſe Perſons that have a delicate

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In all our Converſation, then, with Men, let us be ſober and ſincere; and in our Devotion to God, dutiful and decent; let the One be hearty, and not haughty; (*) and the Other humble, but not homely. — But further, It

Apprehenſion of Pleaſure, voluntarily remove themſelves from one another, to avoid the Diſguſt that threatens them, and to have a better Taſte of the Charms of Converſation, by a new Vigour, which they beſtow upon their Thoughts. Contrariety of Opinions is that which gives Life and Spirit to Converſation; if we were all of one Mind we ſhould in a ſhort Time have little or nothing to diſcourſe of. It is for Want of this Method of Refinement, and better Improvement, that Converſation is generally confined to indifferent, low, or perhaps vicious Subjects; and all that is ſerious and good, is almoſt baniſhed the World. Some are ſo defiled, as to utter nothing that is decent, ſupplying the Want of Wit with the Want of Modeſty, and Want of Reputation with Want of Shame. None ſo ſtrict Exactors of Modeſty from Others, as thoſe who are moſt prodigal of their own.

(†) The following Rules may be of Service in the Caſe. When you are in Company, talk often, but never very loud or long together; abſtain from tell Stories, and when you do, let them be very apt and ſhort, and without any Digreſſions. Talk very little of yourſelf, and do not diſplay your Learning in Company; in mixed Companies never diſpute, or uſe much argumentative Converſation. Never attack whole Bodies of People for the Faults of a few, and never retail, or encourage, private Scandal and Defamation of Characters. It is beſt not to talk of your own or other Perſons domeſtic Affairs in Company, as it may raiſe Prejudices againſt you, and ſhews that you want better Matter for Converſation. Never mimic any one, for though many may join in the Laugh, yet it [under]

stated and enforced.

It is nevertheless but a low Character of the Duty before us, that is be meek and sparing, gentle and inoffensive.

If we would carry it to its due Height, we must exert it, according to its just Import, in all generous Offices, whenever proper Occasions of doing them are presented.

"A good Man, out of the good Treasure of his Heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil Man, out of the evil Treasure of his Heart, that which is evil; for, out of the Abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaketh." (*)

to what any of the Company say to him. The more ingenious & complaisant go no further than pretending to hearken attentively; when at the same Time, a Man may plainly see, that both their Eyes and their Mind are roving from what is said to them, and posting back again to what they long to be at themselves; (*Ego de Cyatho liquor, Tu de Creta respondes*;) not considering, that to seek One's own Pleasure so very passionately, can never be the Way either to please or persuade others; and that diligent Attention & proper Answers, are the two Perfections that accomplish a Man for Company. — In Fact,

That Wise & Conversation, consists more in finding it for Others, than in shewing a great Deal ourselves. He is best out of your Company pleased with his own Facetiousness and Ingenuity, will the latter conclude it again. Most Men had rather please, than admire you; and seek less to be instructed and diverted, than approved and applauded: And it is certainly the most delicate Sort of Pleasure to please ourselves.

In Discourse, it is good to hear Others now and then, for Silence has the same Effect as Authority, besides the Advantages we may make of their Proposals.

(*) Where a Zeal for the Honour of God and the Happiness of Mankind is the governing Passion of a Man's Heart, the Effect of it will naturally appear in such Discourses as tend to promote these Ends: but perhaps is scarce any Incident of Life and Conversation, but what

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they come to the Knowledge of the Perſons you take off, and they will almoſt be ſure to hate you for it. Do not uſe vulgar Proverbs and low Maxims in Company, but in repeating wiſe Sayings, uſe good Language. Be careful not to repeat in one Company what you hear in another, eſpecially what is of a perſonal Nature, and againſt the Character of any One. Finally, I would have you always look with a pleaſant Countenance in the Face of the Perſon you ſpeak to, and be open, frank, and ingenious in your Way of ſpeaking, and accuſtom yourſelf to ſpeak correctly and gracefully.

(†) The general Want of Sincerity in Converſation is a great Proof of our Degeneracy. The World is ſo full of Diſſimulation and Compliments, that Men's Words are hardly any Signification of their Thoughts, and if any ſpeak as they think, they cannot eſcape the Cenſure of Want of Good-breeding. The old Engliſh Plainneſs and Sincerity, that Integrity and Honeſty of Diſpoſition, which argues true Greatneſs of Mind, is almoſt loſt amongſt us. The Diſcourſe in Converſation is now ſo ſwelled with Vanity and Compliment, that if a Man that lived an Age or two ago, ſhould return into the World again, he would ſtand amazed at the Refinement, and it would be a great while before he could bring himſelf to a good Countenance, and a good Conſcience, to converſe with Men upon equal Terms, and in their own Way, as they do now.

It is hard to ſay whether it ſhould more provoke our Contempt or Pity, to hear what ſolemn Expreſſions of Kindneſs in Converſation paſs between Men almoſt upon no Occaſion, how great

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The Wit to Conversation, consists much in Hearing it as Others, than in having a great Deal to say themselves. He who goes out of any Company pleased with his own Facetiousness and Ingenuity, will be apt to come into it again. Most Men had rather please, than admire and seek less to be instructed and diverted, than approved and applauded: And it is certainly the most delicate Sort of Pleasure to please others. It is, [illegible] to hear Others talk, for Silence has the same Effect as Authority, besides the Advantages we may make of their Proposals.

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(*) One Reaſon why we find ſo few Men of Senſe, and agreeable in Converſation, is, that almoſt every One's Mind is more intent on what he himſelf has a mind to ſay, than upon making proper Replies to what any of the, &c. [next Page]

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The Wise Conversation, consists more in Hearing than in Others, than in showing a great Deal ourselves. He who goes out of any Company pleased with his own Facetiousness and Ingenuity, will be sure to conclude it again. Most Men had rather please, than admire and seek less to be instructed and diverted, than approved and applauded: And it is certainly the most delicate Sort of Pleasure to

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That Wise & Good Conversation, consists more in Hearing & for Others, than in showing a great Deal ourselves. He is best out of your Company pleased with his own Facetiousness and Ingenuity, will the latter conciliate it again. Most Men had rather please, than admire you; and seek less to be instructed and diverted, than approved and applauded: And it is certainly the most delicate Sort of Pleasure to be capable of being applied to some Purpose of Morality or Religion; so a Mind thus disposed will immediately perceive and improve the Occasion, and be fond of engaging the Company in such Reflections, as to itself are most agreeable and entertaining. (Serm. CXVII.)

A good Man, then, will make it the great End of his Converſation to promote, as much as in him lies, the Good and Advantage of all Men. (*) But,

Becauſe we can never give ſo clear and diſtinct Notions of any Duty by general Maxims, as by reducing what we ſay to particular Rules of Life, I ſhall obſerve the good and proper Offices of the Tongue, in Converſation, as reducible, to the four following Rules; as being more particularly oppoſed to the Practice of Evil-ſpeaking, already diſcuſſed.

Firſt, Of ſpeaking WELL and advantageouſly of other People.

Secondly, Of judging candidly concerning their Failings or Eſcapes.

Thirdly, Of imparting to them uſeful & wholeſome Inſtructions. — And,

Laſtly, Of reproving them for their Faults.

Not that all the good Offices of Converſation, (as they reſpect the Good & Benefit of other Men,) are comprehended under theſe Particulars; but yet, they

(*) Our Converſation ſhould be ſuch, that Youth may find Improvement in it; Women, Modeſty; the Aged, Reſpect; and all Men, Civility. "Let your Speech be with Grace, ſeaſoned with Salt, that it may edify one another, miniſtring Grace to the Hearers."

they are of such Esteem and Influence, that, if we could be perswaded to the sincere Practice of them, they would dispose us to a much greater Facility of practising all the rest. — And,

First, A good Man will think himself concerned to speak WELL and advantageously of other People.

This is what a Sense of Humanity, and, on most Occasions, of Prudence and good Manners, will oblige him to. — But,

Christian Charity lays upon us still superior and more invincible Motives to an Office so humane and becoming in itself.

How frequently does it happen that we have no Way of being so useful or beneficial to those we love, as by embracing the proper Occasions of speaking in their Favour, or of convincing others who have taken up any unjust Prejudices against them. (*) We

(*) — — *Pudet hæc Opprobria nobis*
Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli.

To hear an open Slander, is a Curse;
But not to find an Answer, is a worse.

Excellent to this Purpose is the following: [viz] "We should endeavour to divert such Discourse, and discourage such Sort of Conversation by all prudent Methods. We should urge what we can in our Neighbour's Vindication; and, upon this Occasion, cite the Examples of such innocent Persons as have been oppressed with Calumny. We should discover the Contradiction and Impossibility of what is advanced

We may be rendered incapable, by the Circumſtances of Life in which God has placed us, of giving other Proofs of our Charity and Benevolence to Mankind; but, This is an Act of Generoſity which almoſt every Man has frequent Opportunities of performing; (*) and which every good Man will certainly think himſelf under an indiſpenſible Obligation, according as Opportunity is given him, to perform. — But,

Secondly, We are to judge candidly of the Failings and Eſcapes of other Men.

Our bleſſed Saviour, who was the perfect Pattern of this divine Virtue, lays the utmoſt Streſs on this Part of our Duty, as even neceſſary to our Salvation. "Judge not, and ye ſhall not be judged."

The Apoſtle makes it one principle Character of Charity, "that it hopeth all things, and believeth all

vanced to defame him, if the Matter will admit of it. We may appeal to his paſt Actions; and, to the ill Reports concerning him, oppoſe all the Good that is otherwiſe known of him, to weaken the Detraction, and to take off the Credit of it. If the Matter is too evident to be denied, we may endeavour to diminiſh the Guilt of it, by imputing it to Ignorance or Surprize, or to the Strength of Temptation, & by owning that the beſt of Men might have found Difficulties in ſuch dangerous Circumſtances. But by no Means muſt we ſhow any Pleaſure or Satisfaction in what is related to our Neighbour's Prejudice, leſt we encourage the Detractor, & ſo become Partakers with him in his Guilt."

(*) See Page 296, 297.

all things, (we) all things where there is Room for it to make candid and favourable Allowances;

Supposing, for Instance, there is any real Foundation for what we hear another Person charged or reproached with, Charity will suggest in his Behalf, that nothing hath happened to him but what is common to Man; that he hath the same Passions with other Men, (*) or may, at the Time of his being overcome, labour under more dangerous and violent Circumstances of Temptation.

We think it reasonable, that these, and such like Alleviations should be admitted in Excuse for our Follies and Vices; and certainly we should think it equally reasonable to admit them in our judging and speaking of others. Why should we govern ourselves, not by the corrupt Affections of Self-Love, but by the known Maxims of Christian Charity.

Indeed, Charity will suppose many mitigating Circumstances in the Case of others Delinquency, as cannot be supposed to concur in our own.

We judge of those criminal Actions, of which we ourselves have been guilty, by Evidence and Self-conviction, and know how they have been in all Respects circumstanced. But, we see the Conduct only, and are ignorant of the Springs from whence it proceeds. Charity, therefore, will not suffer us to judge of our Neighbour by Rigour, and be discreet in every Point."

Serm. CXVII.

of other Men only in exterior Appearance; without knowing any of the ſecret Motives of it. — And, what we do not ſee or know to their Diſadvantage, we ought not, in Charity, to preſume.

If we have been ſo happy, as wholly to eſcape thoſe Snares which other Perſons have been obſerved to fall into, it will, however, be an excellent Rule, (conſidering the Frailty of human Nature,) to reſtrain us from all unchariſable and raſh Cenſure of them, that we ſhould "conſider ourſelves, leſt we alſo be tempted."

Thirdly, It is a further Character of a good Converſation, to impart good and wholeſome Inſtruction, and eſpecially in what relates to the great Duties and Principles of Religion (*).

"The Lips of the Wiſe, (ſaith Solomon,) diſperſe Knowledge." And, in the New Teſtament we are aſſured, concerning this Kind of Diſcourſe, that it miniſters Grace to the Hearers, — that "it edifies and builds us up in our moſt Holy Faith."

When

(*) Let your Subject, (ſays Epictetus,) be ſomething of Neceſſity, & ſuch as may tend to the Uſe and Practice of Virtue, reform the Paſſions, or inſtruct the Underſtanding; ſuch as may miniſter Advice to Men in Difficulties, Comfort to them under Afflictions, Aſſiſtance in the Search of Truth, give them a reverend Senſe of God, and an awful Admiration of his divine Excellencies. — See Note (*) Page 322.

When Christianity was first preached in the World, and for some Ages after, the great Study of the Disciples of Christ was how they might edify One another by a holy and religious Conversation; and, it must be granted, that they took a very proper Method, both for promoting mutual Instruction and inflaming of mutual Zeal.

The Disciples, going to Emmaus, admark what Life and Spirit there was in the Conversation of our Lord "did not our Hearts (say they,) burn within us, while he talked to us on the Way, & opened the Scriptures unto us." — Now,

Tho no Words can ever be impregnated with the same Force and Energy with which our Lord's were; yet certainly, when God, and our great Mediator, when the Riches of divine Grace, when Righteousness and Heaven, are the Subject of our Discourse, when our Language flows from the Heart, and is animated by a vital and experimental Sense of what we talk of; when it has all the Advantages which a true Friendship, and a known Integrity, and the most favourable Opportunities can give it; such Discourse can never fail of moving and affecting us.

A Word of Advice seasonably applied and spoken home to the Conscience of a Sinner in private Conversation, has sometimes made a greater Impression

upon him, and remained longer with him, than many excellent Diſcourſes only at ſolemn Seaſons; and indeed, it is natural enough for us to diſtinguiſh between what is done in the Diſcharge of a general Duty, and what is done out of a particular Motive of Love, and Charity to ourſelves.

Upon which Account it is, that the great Apoſtle ſo frequently recommends a Converſation, which may teſtify the INWARD Senſe we have for Religion and our Zeal for promoting it in others. This is the excellent Advice he gave to the Epheſians, (and the Reaſon of it extends to all ſucceeding Ages of Chriſtianity.)

"Let no corrupt Communications come out of your Mouth, but that which is good, to the Uſe of edifying, that it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers."

So again he exhorts the Coloſſians, "Let your Speech be always with Grace, ſeaſoned with Salt."

Not with thoſe ſatirical Invectives, of which Converſation ſo ordinarily abounds; but with thoſe wholeſome and diſcreet Maxims of Religion, which by the Grace of God, may tend to purify our Hearts, and give us a more lively and affectionate Senſe of our Duty. (*) Not

(*) It would be no difficult Matter to ſhow, which of theſe Subjects Converſation among Chriſtians more generally turns upon: — Thoſe who

Not that religious Subjects are, at all Times, and in all Places, proper to be treated of in private Converſation; no: Religion is a grave and ſerious thing, and ought not to mingle with every trifling and empty Affair; it is holy, and therefore demands too great Reverence to be introduced in common, with vulgar and profane Diſcourſe. (*) — Yet,

This we may do, without expoſing the Honour and Dignity of it: [viz.] Whenever any Error of ill Conſequence to Faith or good Manners is advanced in Converſation, we may, & ought to take the Occaſion of refuting it; or, where we find any ignorant Perſon in a good and ſerious Diſpoſition to receive Inſtruction, we ſhould endeavour, by proper Arguments, to bring him to the Acknowledgment of the Truth. — Beſides,

There are Seaſons, and eſpecially in the Society of grave and prudent Perſons, wherein it may not only be convenient, but highly requiſite profeſſedly to make

who have a uſeful Way of employing their Time, or who ſpend a great Part of it in making and receiving Viſits, are beſt able to judge of what is here ſaid. It is (we fear,) to ſuch Perſons, a much more agreeable Entertainment to expoſe the Sinner, than to ſupport the Cauſe of Virtue againſt that of Sin.

(*) A Man of true Piety, that has no Delight to carry on, (like One of an eſtabliſhed Fortune,) elegant Talks, the moſt polite. The One never talks of his Wealth, nor the Other of Religion, but when there is Occaſion for it.

Serm. CXVII.

make ſome important Article of Religion, or Morality, the Subject of Diſcourſe. (*) And to this End are theſe Commands in Scripture:

That we ſhould "conſider one another, to provoke to Love and good Works:"

"That no Man ſeek his own, but every one his Brother's Good to Edification." — And,

"That, as every one hath received the Gift, even ſo we ſhould miniſter the ſame one to another, as good Stewards of the manifold Grace of God."

Laſtly, Where proper Occaſions offer, we are to admoniſh Men, in a friendly and decent Manner, of their Faults.

There is perhaps no Duty of Religion which requires greater Caution or Prudence in the Diſcharge of it, than This of fraternal Reproof. Indeed, the greateſt Abilities are required to qualify us for ſo nice and ungrateful an Office; but which yet, on many Occaſions, becomes indiſpenſably neceſſary. However, theſe Hints may be of ſingular Service hereto, [viz.] that we properly time our Rebukes, when the Sinner is cool and alone, and with that Seriouſneſs as may convince him, that what makes us ſo ſevere towards his Sins, is purely for his ſake, and out of mere Charity to his Soul.

I am fully aware of the general Objection which Mankind

(*) There is perhaps nothing more pleaſing and improving, than ſerious and ſenſible Converſation; but if we conſider it as it appears in general amongſt all Ranks, we ſhall find it very defective.

If it be objected, that it is very difficult at all Times to find Matter and Occaſion for good Diſcourſe. We anſwer, firſt, we do not utterly and wholly exclude the common Accidents of Life, the Buſineſs and Affairs of it, nay even things of a pleaſant and divertive Nature, if modeſt and inoffenſive, from being ſometimes the Subject of Converſation; but we ſay, Religion ought to be the main and great End of it.

Secondly, It is hard to conceive how a good Chriſtian ſhould often want either Matter or Opportunity for pious Diſcourſe.

As for Matter, he muſt ſuffer the Providences of God to paſs without any Obſervation or Remark; — he muſt be a Stranger to the Works of Nature; — he muſt be utterly unread in the Hiſtory of human Affairs; — he muſt be unacquainted with the Book of God; and he muſt have little Experience of the Power and Operation of God's Word and Spirit upon his own Soul; — he muſt have reflected very little on the Wiles of Satan, the Temptations of the World, and the Defects and Weakneſſes of human Nature, who can want Matter for good Diſcourſe.

The Man of Letters, the Man of Buſineſs, the Man of Pleaſure, never wants Matter; Books furniſh the one, Buſineſs the other, and their Vices and Diverſions the third. It is ſtrange that the Chriſtian alone ſhould be barren; the Chriſtian, who is a Child of the

Mankind have to what is here advanced, [viz] "the Fear of offending." — But,

We are not to plead Difficulties in Excuſe for what the Honour and Intereſt of Religion may require from us. — And yet,

After all, there is not, perhaps, ſo great Danger of giving Offence, by a modeſt and ſeaſonable Reproof, as the Backwardneſs of Men to this Duty is apt to heighten their Apprehenſions of.

Solomon, (who certainly underſtood human Nature very well, and formed the admirable Rules he hath left us upon his Knowledge of it,) lays it down as a Maxim, that "he who rebuketh ſhall afterwards find more Favour, than he that flattereth with the Tongue." (*) It

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Arreptâque Manu, Quid agis? Dulciſſime Rerum!

"Why beſtoweſt Thou on every Man the Flattery of unmeaning Words? Thou knoweſt, when returned thee, thou regardeſt it not, He knoweth he lieth unto thee; yet he knoweth thou wilt thank him for it. Speak in Sincerity, and thou ſhalt hear with Inſtruction."

We are not ſillily to give Credit to thoſe that flatter us, nor yet rudely reject the Compliments they make, when we think we deſerve them; this falſe Modeſty is little leſs diſguſtful than a fooliſh Vanity.

It requires great Art and Delicacy to ſeaſon Praiſes well; but there is alſo a Way of receiving them, when they are juſt, that does not offend Modeſty. — We ſhould rather modeſtly hear the Praiſes that are given us, and we deſerve, than reject them with a myſterious and affected Roughneſs; It is equally ridiculous to be fond of Praiſe, or to refuſe

make ſome important Article of Religion, or Morality, the Subject of Diſcourſe. (x) And to this End are theſe Commands in Scripture:

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Laſtly, Where proper Occaſion

Light, and of the Day, and ſhould abound in Wiſdom and Underſtanding: the Chriſtian, who has every Hour Matters of the Higheſt Importance on his Hands; and who, finally, is entertained with more and richer Pleaſures than the moſt fortunate Epicurean can pretend to.

As to Occaſion or Opportunity of good Diſcourſe, did the Heart run that way, every thing would afford it us. But, alas! we rather ſhun than ſeek Occaſions; and we know not by what ſtrange Error we have baniſhed all Matters of Religion out of Company; as if nothing but Ignorance or Affectation could make a Man ſo impertinent, as to talk of any thing that were pious and good.

Is not this a very near Approach to the being aſhamed of Chriſt? and if it be, how ſhall we eſcape the Sentence which is denounced againſt it? "Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my Words, in this wicked and adulterous Generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father with the holy Angels."

Should we be introduced, &c. (under)

Should we be introduced into the Company of the Nobility and firſt Quality, we ſhall find that the Ladies chiefly converſe about the preſent Faſhions and Intrigues, and the Gentlemen reſpecting their Horſes, their Sports, and Amuſements. If we go amongſt the Gentry who have no Titles, we ſhall find the Converſation is chiefly the ſame, or elſe on theatrical Amuſements; but if they ſhould not be found of the latter, ſtill there is nothing ſerious, or even refined or ingenious, in their Converſation; and if any thing of this Kind is introduced, there is immediately ſuch a Silence and Uneaſineſs obſerved, that ſhews how much they differ in it; amongſt ſuch People, ſpeaking of Religion is preaching, learned Converſation is called Pedantry or Dulneſs, and ingenuity is termed Conceit or Affectation; in ſhort, as thoſe in high Life ſpend almoſt all their Time, either in Dreſs, Viſits, Cards, or other Amuſements, they have ſo little Time for Reading, that their Converſation cannot be very improving.

In the lower Ranks, as very few have had the Advantages of Education, we cannot therefore expect Improvement; beſides this, as moſt of them are obliged to be employed all the Day in Labour, and are afterwards much fatigued, they are not likely to improve much by Reading; for theſe Reaſons, and becauſe moſt in low Life take Delight in Noiſe and vulgar Mirth, they are quite unfit for ſerious Converſation.

Maxims have to what is here advanced, [viz] "the Fear of offending." — But,

We are not to plead Difficulties in Excuse for what the Honour and Interest of Religion may require from us. — And yet,

After all, there is not, perhaps, so great Danger of giving Offence, by a modest and seasonable Reproof, as the Backwardness of Men to this Duty is apt to heighten their Apprehensions of.

Solomon, (who certainly understood human Nature very well, and formed the admirable Rules he hath left us upon his Knowledge of it,) lays it down as a Maxim, that "he who rebuketh shall afterwards find more Favour, than he that flattereth with the Tongue." (*) It

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"Why bestowest Thou on every Man the Flattery of unmeaning Words? Thou knowest, when returned thee, thou regardest it not, till knoweth he lieth unto thee; yet he knoweth thou wilt thank him for it. Speak in Sincerity, and thou shalt hear with Instruction."

We are not silly to give Credit to those that flatter us, nor yet rudely reject the Compliments they make, when we think we deserve them; this false Modesty is little less disgustful than a foolish Vanity.

It requires great Art and Delicacy to season Praises well; but there also a Way of receiving them, when they are just, that does not offend Modesty. — We should rather modestly hear the Praises that are given us, and we deserve, than reject them with a mysterious and affected roughness; It is equally ridiculous to be fond of Praise, or to refuse

make ſome important Article of Religion, or Morality, the Subject of Diſcourſe. And to this End are theſe Commands in Scripture:

That we ſhould "conſider one another, to provoke to Love and good Works:"

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Laſtly, Where [illegible]

Light, and of the Day, and ſhould abound in Wiſdom and Underſtanding: the Chriſtian, who has every Hour Matters of the Higheſt Importance on his Hands; and who, finally, is entertained with

As to the middle Rank of Mankind, though they are the beſt, yet moſt of them are ſo much engaged in Buſineſs, and take ſo little Pleaſure in Reading, that they are incapable of excelling in Converſation, eſpecially as many of them ſo much imitate their Superiors in Dreſs and Diſſipation.

If it ſhould be enquired what is the beſt Converſation, and how may we improve the preſent bad State of it? It is anſwer'd, that, No Stiffneſs is recommended, no improper Solemnity or Formality, but Eaſe and Politeneſs united with Senſe, Taſte, Learning, and a communicative Diſpoſition. Where Circumſtances will admit, and in proper Change, Learning in general and the fine Arts, but more eſpecially Hiſtory, Geography, and Biography, ſhould be frequently the Subjects of Converſation. If many in all Ranks, according to their Abilities, would often engage in ſuch Converſation as this, it would ſoon not only exclude Gaming, Scandal, and Intemperance, but afford great intellectual Pleaſure, ſtimulate to further Improvements in Learning, and be productive of important and numerous Benefits to Society.

In public or mixed Company, in Order to avoid Slander and bringing Trouble upon ourſelves, our Converſation ſhould be chiefly upon *Things* and *Places*, and not upon *Perſons* and *Characters*.

Mankind have to what is here advanced, [viz] "the Fear of offending." — But,

We are not to plead Difficulties in Excuſe for what the Honour and Intereſt of Religion may require from us. — And yet,

After all, there is not, perhaps, ſo great Danger of giving Offence, by a modeſt and ſeaſonable Reproof, as the Backwardneſs of Men to this Duty is apt to heighten their Apprehenſions of.

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It is no common Blessing to meet with a faithful, sensible, [illegible] it with too manifest an Affectation. We are to admit what is civilly & obligingly said to us, and dexterously turn the Discourse, so as they that speak to us may have no Reason to repent their Commendation, or to look on us as unbred or brutal.

Praise is a Sort of Tribute paid to real Worth; it is, therefore, neither affectedly to be rejected, nor too eagerly courted, if we would not be the Property of those who give it (who prepare their Way, by this Allurement, to obtain whatever they desire, when once we are intoxicated with the Incence; for the Heart has no Avenue so open, as that of Flattery, which, (like some Enchantment) lays all its Guards asleep. The refusing, or accepting Praise rationally, gracefully, and discreetly, is as great a Trial of a wise Man, as the Cupil is of Silver.

To make a Practice of squandring insipid Praises upon every one, is a very despicable Character. — Civility demands that we should be complimental upon some Occasions, but it is turning Fool indiscriminately to bestow our Compliments, learned by Heart, upon all Comers; and, as soon as we accost them, begin their Panegyricks.

Praise has always something gross in it, if it lie too open, and go on in a direct Line.

The Standards for Praise are *Homer* and *Virgil*; *Homer* praises not *Achilles*, but by a simple and bare Relation of his Actions; And never was any Man praised so delicately as *Augustus* by *Virgil*; by covert Ways he conducts him to Glory, - and saves all the Modesty of the Person he praises, even while he overwhelms him with it.

The true Art of Praise, is to lay laudible things simply, but delicately; for Praise is not to be endured, unless fine and hidden; It is so difficult a thing to praise as we ought, that it is a Rock, which they that are Wise, will shun. — He loves us better, who endeavours to make us good, than he who strives to please us.

Learn to contemn all Praise betimes,
For Flattery is the Nurse of Crimes.

Over-great Encomiums do many Times more Hurt than Good; for,

sensible, discreet Friend; faithful to conceal nothing

from

for, when any thing is extolled so highly, we generally imagine to ourselves greater Perfection, than there is in Truth in it; for Reality can never come up to Imagination: (great Promises too often deceive the Expectation:) So that the Perfection, falling short of the Idea, we slight that, which before we admired. — Besides,

Speaking too highly of the Characters and Circumstances of others, or praising them in any Respect beyond Truth, is a very odious Sort of Insincerity, because it abuses Men into a vain and foolish Opinion of themselves, and an ill-grounded Confidence of the Kindness & Goodwill of Others towards them; and equally misleades those to whom we exalt them, and consequently produces grievously bad Consequences of many Kinds.

Bonum est laudari, sed præstantius est esse laudabilem. Ut Ignis Fumo præponenda est: Ita Virtus præ Laude, (quæ sicut Fumus Aura est, et in auras evanescit,) eligenda. — Respect, but never fawn upon the Great.

Indeed, The only Benefit of Flattery, is, that by hearing what we are NOT, we may be instructed what we ought to be.

The Character of the Person who commends us, is always to be considered, before we set a Value upon their Esteem. The Wife applauds him whom he thinks most virtuous. The rest of the World, him who is most wealthy. — Indeed,

Tho Flattery is with Difficulty discerned from Friendship, (as in every Motion and Affect of the Mind they are mutually mingled,) yet we may always discover the Flatterer from the Friend in his Advice: One is constant and unalterable in his Opinion, & exhorts us to what is virtuous: The Other changes his Opinion of things as fast as we can, & always advises us to do just what he sees we have a Mind to do.

Adulatio apprime et propriis auribus recepta, in Præcordia ima descendit, novit ad mores duces blandus Insinuare. — Sicut fumosæ fuit amara Lacrimis; Ita semper suavis est amara Dulcedo.

from us, sensible to remark our Faults, and discreet to

Incedis per Ignes
Suppositos Cineri doloso.

You tread on Fire beneath the Ashes hid.

Est Genus Hominum, qui esse primas se omnium rerum volunt, — nec sunt; hoc conjector: hisce ego non pare me ut rideam, sed eis ultro arrideo, et eorum Ingenia admiror simul: Quicquid dicunt, laudo; id rursum si negant, laudo id quoque: negat quis? nego: ait? aio: postremo imperavi egomet mihi, omnia assentari: is Rarissimus nunc est multo uberrimus.

Quid, quod admissi Genis prudentissima, laudat
Strumosem Indoctæ, Pectora deformis Amici.
Nativo commentis ait? Rides? majore Cachinno
Concutitur, Flet, si Lacrimas affexit Amici;
Nec dolet: Igniculum Brumæ si Tempore posces,
Accipit Endromyden: si dixeris, æstuo, sudat.

Assonat is velut, plangentibus assonat Echo:
Dixerat, Ecquis adest? et adest, responderat Illa.
Voce, Veni, magna clamat; vocat Illa vocantem:
Respicit, et rursus nullo veniente, Quid, inquit,
Me fugis? et totidem quot dixit Verba recepit:
Perstat, et alterna deceptus Imagine Vocis,
Huc coeamus, *inquit*; *nullique libentius unquam*
Responsura Sono, coeamus *rettulit Echo.*

De alieno Corio ludit. — *Cibo indignus est Assentator.*

Verbis pensa, Verbis qui suadet tibi.

Let Flattery, therefore, (the Nurse of Crimes) be far removed from the Seat of Friendship. — *Laudatore nihil insidiosius.*

Mea non est Simulatio. — *Domus sum, non Œdipus.*

By throwing an undistinguished Glare of Praise on every Object, we perceive no Object at all in its just and genuine Light. He who commends every one, in Effect, commends no one; an undistinguish-

ing

apprehend us for them; But, to be able to believe and follow Advice, is the Perfection of Happiness.

Besides what hath been already delivered, we might

in Praise confounds the Characters of Men, as well as undistinguishing Censure. The speaking well of all Mankind is the worst sort of Detraction; for it takes away the Reputation of the few good, by making them all alike.

We are not, therefore, to praise promiscuously, or general; but make a Distinction where there is really a Difference.

Velut: Thus non Hominibus, sed Diis convenit; ita, Laus, non indigna, sed bonis solis Viris tribuenda est. Laude parce; vitiosa parcitur. Ne vitiosa existimaveris aliorum laudationes, quæ tua quoque Conscientia. Teipsum interroga. Qualis ea; et si Animus tibi respondebit, te longe alium esse, quam Hic, aut Ille te repræsentat, magis credere debes tibi ipsi, cui se notior, quam aliis.

Great and good Men will rather look for their Character in the Writings & Precepts of Philosophers, than in the Hyperboles of Flatterers; for they know that wise Books are always true Friends; whereas, the latter speak only what they know will please us.

Flattery will never be out of Date so long as there are Knaves to give it, and Fools to receive it. If we did not flatter ourselves, Flattery from others would have little Effect, and therefore the greatest and most dustful Flatterer is Man's self. We are all pleased with Flattery, because our Pride inclines us to think that we deserve Praise, and there are some who put on affected Humility, in Order to receive more Praise than they deserve. Endeavour therefore diligently to know thyself, and so, &c. [under]

to an Accommodation and Compliance, without any Principles but those of Selfishness. And No. 57. on the Selfishness of the Man of the World. With No. 24. of the Spectator. And No. 238.

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Quid, quod adhibenda Gens prudentissima, laudat
Sermonem Indocti, Factum deformis Amici.
Natio comœda est: Rides? majore Cachinno
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[redacted]

in, and so shall no Flatterer deceive thee.

Si vitaverit Assentatorem, facile agnoscetur ipse verum Deum quisque diligere, se velle esse THRASO, cum quem describit GNATHO.

Assentator, cum salutat, Vulpes ait. See No. 339 of the Spectator.

Ne cupias placuisse nimis.

See Rhet. Essays, No. 12. on that Kind of Wisdom which consists in Accommodation and Compliance; without any Principles but those of Selfishness. And No. 27. on the Selfishness of the Men of the World. With No. 24. of the Spectator. And No. 238.

might here, (whilst treating on Conversation in general,) enlarge the Discourse in other Respects also; for Words & common Strain of talking may be very blameable in many Kinds; they may be forward, abusive, and scurrilous; they may be wanton, vicious, and obscene; they may be loaded with Oaths and Imprecations, or tower into a yet higher blasphemous Impiety. But we should look on all these Vices of the Tongue, with Contempt, Horror, and Detestation: we should guard against the Practice of them in Ourselves, and that Caution will secure us from being infected by them in Others: it will be a Direction in the Choice of our Acquaintance, and teach us to abandon the Commerce of those who give themselves a-lose in such Liberties.

But these will claim a Place separately for themselves, in their due Adjustments, as far as they have not already been treated of.

Instead of giving ourselves over to such rude and injurious Liberties, we should weigh well our unborn Words in the Balance, make our Speech temperate and decent, and keep it up to a Strain of Courtesy and Civility. Nothing can more charm than that Graciousness of Language, that gives no Offence, even where it gives Reproof. Good Words are afforded at the same Price as ill, & are not only cheap, but prevalent upon all Occasions.

SERMON

On the ſame Subject.

Philip. i. 27. "Only let your Converſation be as "becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt."

Having already conſidered common Converſation, as it regards Mildneſs, Charity, or Beneficence towards our Neighbour, I ſhall here proceed to conſider it more immediately with Regard to Ourſelves.

In the former Reſpects, Duty is more apparently concerned; becauſe Mildneſs, Charity and Beneficence are really eſſential to the Good of Mankind in general; but this laſt Branch of Converſation, which includes all other Subjects of Diſcourſe whatever, may ſeem at firſt View, to be of too indifferent a Nature to fall under Precept, eſpecially in this Place, where it is generally expected that Articles of ſtrict Divinity ſhould be treated of, rather than the Affairs of common Life, where Inſtructions of Piety ought rather to be inculcated, than thoſe Directions which it is the proper Buſineſs of Reaſon and Prudence to ſuggeſt. But there is nothing ſo

indifferent

might here, (whilst treating on Conversation in general,) enlarge the Discourse in other Respects also; for Words & common Strain of talking may be very blameable in many Kinds; they may be forward, abusive, and scurrilous; they may be wanton, vicious, and obscene; they may be loaded with Oaths and Imprecations, or tower into a yet higher blasphemous Impiety. But we should look on all these Vices of the Tongue, with Contempt, Horror, and Detestation: we should guard against the Practice of them in Ourselves, and that Caution will secure us from being infected by them in Others: it will be a Direction in the Choice of our Acquaintance, and teach us to abandon the Commerce of those who give themselves a-loose in such Liberties.

But these will claim a Place separately for themselves, in their due Adjustments, as far as they have not already been treated of.

Instead of giving ourselves over to such rude and injurious Liberties, we should weigh well our unborn Words in the Balance, make our Speech temperate and decent, and keep it up to a Strain of Courtesy and Civility. Nothing can more charm than that Graciousness of Language, that gives no Offence, even where it gives Reproof. Good Words are afforded at the same Price as ill, & are not only cheap, but prevalent upon all Occasions.

SERMON

On the same Subject.

Philip. i. 27. "Only let your Converſation be as "becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt."

Having already conſidered common Converſation, as it regards Mildneſs, Charity, or Beneficence towards our Neighbour, I ſhall here proceed to conſider it more immediately with Regard to Ourſelves. In the former Reſpects, Duty is more apparently concerned; becauſe Mildneſs, Charity and Beneficence are really eſſential to the Good of Mankind in general; but this laſt Branch of Converſation, which includes all other Subjects of Diſcourſe whatever, may ſeem at firſt View, to be of too indifferent a Nature to fall under Precept, eſpecially in this Place, where it is generally expected that Articles of ſtrict Divinity ſhould be treated of, rather than the Affairs of common Life, where Inſtructions of Piety ought rather to be inculcated, than thoſe Directions which it is the proper Buſineſs of Reaſon and Prudence to ſuggeſt. But there is nothing ſo

indifferent

indifferent, as not to be capable both of a good & a bad Turn; nothing ſo minute in the moſt remote Inſtances of Duty, which the Goſpel may not improve into a Virtue, & conſequently which may not fall under uſeful Conſideration in a Chriſtian Way, tho ſuch Points as theſe need not be ſo frequently & largely inſiſted on, as thoſe of greater Importance.

Our bleſſed Saviour compares "the Kingdom of Heaven," (i.e) the Kingdom of God's Grace or the Goſpel, "unto Leaven, which a Woman took & hid in three Meaſures of Meal till the whole was leavened;" which Similitude well expreſſes how wonderfully the Goſpel inſinuates itſelf into every Part of our Life; what an uſeful Ferment it makes with Reſpect to our whole Behaviour; what a grateful Tincture it gives to every one of our Actions. No Circumſtance therefore of Life is below a Chriſtian Regard, ſince there is no Circumſtance of it, which may not fall under Chriſtian Improvement.

But this Topic is of itſelf far from being of a trifling Nature; our bleſſed Saviour aſſures us that we ſhall "give an Account of every idle Word:" where the Term IDLE does not only ſignify blaſphemous, but THAT likewiſe which does not anſwer any of the proper Ends of Diſcourſe, either the Glory of God, or the Good of Ourſelves or Others. — Again,

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Converſation takes up a great Deal of our Time, and a due Management of our Time is a moſt important Concern; it is not ſufficient not to employ it to ill Purpoſes, we are to employ it to all the Advantages we are able; it is therefore a Miſapplication of a moſt precious Talent to ſpend much of our Time, if not in ſuch Converſation as is not directly ſinful, yet in ſuch as is productive of no Good: the Notion of Duty requires ſomething POSITIVE, & we muſt not content ourſelves with barely, "ceaſing to ſpeak EVIL, we muſt learn to ſpeak WELL;" not that we need to be continually dwelling on pious Subjects: the Affairs of this Life challenge ſome Regard, and may be managed in Converſation to great Advantage; our Faculties call for Improvement in a natural as well as a moral Way, and ſuch an Improvement will be found on many Accounts to be of true and abſolute Service. — Further yet,

The Tongue is a Member of great Conſequence, for Life and Death are in the Power of the Tongue: it is likewiſe very unruly; give it but an innocent Looſe, and you will ſoon find it too headſtrong to be again eaſily reſtrained; it is a Member of all other, the moſt forward and unwearied in Exerciſe, and requires great Care and Diligence to exerciſe it aright: in much Talk there is much Danger, and he that

multiplieth Words, multiplieth Miſchiefs. As therefore Society makes Speech neceſſary, and our Corruptions make it dangerous; as Diſcourſe ſtreams forth into numberleſs Channels, and is apt while it flows continually to degenerate, it will become us to guard againſt its ill Tendency in every the moſt minute Circumſtance, to obſerve every Channel through which it paſſes, and to endeavour to keep it up to its proper Strength and Purity, "as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt." — And, that we may the better be able to do this, let us proceed,

I. To conſider what are proper Topics for Diſcourſe under this Branch of our Diviſion, and

II. Remark a little upon thoſe, which, however improperly, are nevertheleſs generally made the Topics of common Converſation.

1ſt, Let us conſider what are proper Topics for Diſcourſe under this Branch of our Diviſion.

The End of Converſation being both to improve and gratify, we may conſider what Topics thoſe are which, with Reſpect to this Life, fall under theſe two Heads.

The proper Topics for Improvement, are ſuch as tend to enlarge our Minds, - to exerciſe our Reaſon, - to inform our Underſtanding, - to increaſe our

our Knowledge, and the like. — Topics for Gratification, are such as tend to polish and civilize Society, — as render Mankind pleased with one another, and give Life a cheerful Mixture of Innocence and Complacency.

The first of these Sorts are Arts and Sciences, Observations drawn from History or Experience, &c.

Now, it is our Duty to converse upon such Subjects, because it is our Duty to improve in every Instance of Excellence which it hath pleased the Almighty to place within the Reach of our Abilities; the more we know, the more we are enabled to glorify our great Creator, and to benefit Mankind; and Conversation is an obvious Means of improving in all Sorts of Knowledge; it lets us into Men's Thoughts of things, and we are thereby either confirmed or rectified in our own Judgements; we likewise make our own Notions more intimately our own, by expressing them to others: our inward Conceptions are as it were, the Embrios of Knowledge, which would frequently prove abortive, did not Conversation give them their true Life; we always feel more strong Impressions of that which we labour to inculcate, and become best informed ourselves by endeavouring to inform others.

These Topics of Discourse relate not only to the

Learned, but to every Perſon whatever: there is no one ſo ignorant, as not to know ſomething at leaſt of ſome Art or Science; no one ſo dull, as not to be able to make ſome Obſervations for regulating the Conduct of Human Life: Men of low Capacities & Attainments cannot indeed converſe ſo well as Men of more deep & extenſive Knowledge, but they can converſe according to their Knowledge, & where-ever there is any Knowledge, there is Room for Improvement.

Again, — Such Diſcourſe as this is a great Promoter of Induſtry; Difficulties in Converſation are made extremely ſlight, and Men are fond of endeavouring to act over that in Reality, which is ſo eaſily tranſacted in common Diſcourſe; Buſineſs paſſeth off much better when Men are apprized of the Neceſſity and Practicableneſs of it from others, and we are more able to ſtruggle in Life to Advantage by underſtanding the various Turns of Affairs, the different Tempers of Men, and the due Management of them: all this while the Mind is cultivating and fitting itſelf for brighter Scenes of Action, raiſing itſelf out of the cloudy Regions of Brutality & Ignorance, into a State of a more refined Humanity, and in all Reſpects becoming more capable of doing public Service.

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The other Branch of proper Topics for Discourse, with Respect to the things of this Life, are those of Gratification.

The Mind of Man is too weak to be always upon the Stretch; serious Points are apt to fatigue; when long attended to, it requires something lively and refreshing in Conversation to keep up our Spirits to their proper Pitch, & so allow them their full Scope of acting; here the agreeable Excursions of Wit, brisk Turns of Fancy, &c. are very allowable, to give a Relaxation to the Mind, & to fit it again for the Prosecution of what is more serious, in its Turn.

This indeed falls in with the inferior Faculties of the Soul; but the inferior Faculties ought to have their proper Exercise, and the Imagination may indulge itself in humourous Subjects, as long as it is confined within the Bounds of Innocence & Discretion: Topics of this Sort are infinite; the common Occurrences of Life will never fail to furnish them out to us in large Quantities; and it is rather our Business to manage them aright, than to discover what they are. It may be proper barely to mention, that we ought to choose those Topics which are most manly, because though we are to be diverted by such Conversation, we are to be diverted like rational Creatures, and the Satisfaction we meet with

in this Way at leaſt to be what common Senſe may approve. — Again,

Such Diſcourſe ſhould not engroſs too much of our Time, becauſe it is abſurd to turn what ſhould only amuſe, into an Employment; and to make that a real Buſineſs which is intended only to relieve from the Fatigues of Buſineſs.

Upon the Whole, That Converſation which more immediately relates to ourſelves, and turns chiefly upon the Affairs of this Life, will, when rightly managed, ſerve many good Purpoſes; it is improving, it is agreeable, it enlarges and refines the Soul, it promotes mutual Kindneſs and Society, it is a conſtant Spring of Cheerfulneſs and good Nature, it fills up Time at leaſt innocently, and prevents the Abuſes of Speech too common in the World; The which we are now,

II. In the ſecond Place, to remark upon.

Converſation, with Reſpect to the Affairs of this Life, generally turns upon vain and impertinent Topics; Faſhions, Dreſs, Diverſions, Entertainments, &c. are Subjects which are moſt ſeriouſly argued upon and ſolemnly diſcuſſed; ſo that if we were to judge of Life from common Diſcourſe, the whole Buſineſs of it is errand Foppery. Now this betrays great Levity of Mind, and tends wonderfully

to weaken and enervate our ſuperior Faculties; he who labours to be learned upon ſuch Articles as theſe, finds out but a mean Employment for his Reaſon, and may converſe for Ages without advancing one Step forwards in Wiſdom: ſuch Diſcourſe anſwers no Purpoſe at all: he muſt have but little Underſtanding who thinks it improving, and he but a bad Taſte, who thinks it agreeable: it is not indeed in the worſt Senſe corrupt Communication, but it is ſo far corrupt, that it is unedifying; it neither is of Service to the Speakers, neither doth it "miniſter Grace unto the Hearers," it is at leaſt an unprofitable Method of ſquandering away Time; it is a Debaſement of our Minds, and a Neglect of improving ourſelves in thoſe Inſtances of Knowledge, which it hath pleaſed the Almighty to give us Capacity for attaining, and which we might be able to turn to public Service. This may poſſibly ſeem a needleſs and unreaſonable Piece of Severity, to abridge Converſation to ſuch a Degree, as to cut off from it ſo many Topics, which are generally thought at leaſt innocent and inoffenſive, eſpecially ſince they lie level to the top Capacities of many Perſons in Life; ſo that if thoſe Perſons be debarred diſcourſing in this Way, they muſt be entirely ſecluded from bearing any Share in all Converſation

whatever. — But, let it be conſidered, that the Debaſement of our Faculties is a Perverſion of them; that the Non-improvement of our Talents is an Abuſe of them, and that vain Diſcourſe is ſinful, as well as that which is profane and uncharitable. We ought therefore to be extremely careful what Turn our Converſation takes, becauſe trifling Diſcourſe is apt to grow wonderfully upon us, and betrays us inſenſibly into ſuch Levities as common Reaſon would induſtriouſly decline, as true Sobriety would be aſhamed of, and, ſince we are to "give an Account of every IDLE Word," ſuch as Chriſtianity would be afraid of incurring. Here it is obvious to reflect how ſevere a Judgment thoſe Perſons muſt paſs, who employ both their Time and Study in this Way, ſo far as even to bring this Sort of Converſation into Rule and Method, thoſe, whoſe whole Life is ſpent in impertinent Viſits, and whoſe Viſits are made up of idle Diſcourſe. — But,

There is one Topic of this Sort of Converſation which deſerves to be more particularly taken notice of, becauſe it is very common and very miſchievous, and that is talking about other People's Buſineſs. This Habit ariſes from a trifling Curioſity, which tends to no End, and can ſerve no Purpoſe; yet, if you name any indifferent Perſon, it is a great Chance

Chance if you do not hear his whole History, his Pedigree, his Alliances, his Oeconomy, his Behaviour, his Miscarriages, his lucky Accidents, his Views in Life, &c. all are enlarged upon; what he does in his Closet, let be never so innocent, will be as tho' it was done upon the House-top; his Motions are observed, his Actions examined, his Designs enquired into, and the Man scrutinized in every Particular.

This is not indeed so properly Defamation, because nothing scandalous perhaps is spoken; but it is very prejudicial upon many Accounts; it is a large Step towards Defamation, and it can scarcely be imagined, that where so exact a Survey is taken of any Person, and so much Talk about him, that there will not start up a great Deal of Scandal; besides, this gives Occasion to designing Men to make an ill Use of many Circumstances, which may be in themselves innocent and commendable, and which, though very proper to be done, are not proper to be commonly known. — Again,

This represents Men's Affairs in a very undue and partial Light, because the putting together a few disjointed outward Appearances will make a Man's Behaviour seem very inconsistent. In Order to talk of Men's Affairs truly, we ought to know

their Springs and Motives of Action; and in all indifferent Matters, it is much better to leave them to judge for themſelves, becauſe they underſtand the WHOLE of the Caſe, and beſt know their own Circumſtances, and thoſe who judge by Appearance ſeldom judge righteous Judgment; this therefore expoſes thoſe they talk of to the World, by placing the Truth that relates to them in an imperfect View, and mixing a great Deal that is falſe with it; for Men of this Caſt of Mind frequently improve Suſpicions into Certainties, and have always a Fancy ſtrong enough for large Invention.

St. Peter calls ſuch Men "buſy Bodies in other Men's Matters;" the original Word for which may be more literally tranſlated "OVERSEERS of other Men's Matters." Now it argues great Pride and Forwardneſs in thoſe who take upon them this general Inſpection; it carries with it the Air of Guardianſhip over Mankind, as though no Action ought to eſcape their Notice, and all Buſineſs whatever ſhould fall under their Cognizance. "Who made me a Judge or a Divider over you?" ſays our bleſſed Saviour to the Perſon who deſired him to interpoſe about dividing an Inheritance; but had any One elſe been applied to, the Caſe would probably have been immediately taken in Hand. In ſhort, there is

is a strange Fondness in Mankind to meddle with the Affairs of others, and that to a great Degree of neglecting their own; & this is a Principle of Pride and Wantonness in its Origin, and of Mischief in its Effects; it is entirely contrary to Modesty, Good-nature, and good Sense; it bears no Christian Marks at all about it, it being a gospel, as well as a prudential Precept, That "every Man should study to be quiet, and to do his own Business;" and we find those Persons sharply reprimanded by St. Paul, "who learn to be idle, wandering from House to House; and not only idle, but Tatlers also & busy Bodies, who speak things which they ought not."

Thus have we considered the Matter of Conversation in its several Respects, whether of Piety towards God, of Mildness and Charity towards our Neighbour, and Prudence with Respect to ourselves, and shown how subservient we might make it to the Glory of the former, and to the Benefit of ourselves and others; but it is notorious how corrupt our Conversation is in every Instance of it, insomuch that the true Use of Speech is entirely perverted, and what was intended by the Almighty for the Advantage of Society, is really turned into the Bane and Pest of it. — Now, that which requires to be so largely and thoroughly reformed necessarily engages

a more minute Consideration; but whatever is or can be said of this Sort is so well known from continual Experience, that the Familiarity of it takes off from the Impressions which might otherwise be made concerning it, & we shall not be so well able to judge of the Guilt and Mischiefs of common Conversation as by removing it to some Distance, and seeing it without Partiality.

Let any One, therefore, after he hath spent many Hours in that which is called good and engaging Company, seriously examine with himself what useful Improvement either in a moral or a natural Way he can make of the Conversation that has passed, and it is a great Chance if he be made awhit the wiser or better for it; it may be well perhaps if he carries away as much Innocence and Sobriety, or rather as little Guilt & Levity, as he brought with him.

As a proper Supplement to the foregoing, and Enforcement of it, I shall now shew the Advantages of it, when conformable to the Rules already given.

We surely need not to be informed that the Almighty made Man a sociable Creature, & that Discourse is a Fund of vast Improvement, that Speech opens the Hearts of Men, & lets us into many worthy Notions without Pains or Difficulty; that "as

"Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth the Conversation of Men one another;" that we may become wise upon their Stock of Knowledge, by transcribing into our own Minds them well-digested Sentiments; that Learning flows from this Fountain in large Streams, and that we may drink deeply of the Waters of Instruction with Ease and Pleasure.

There is nothing can be more justly charged with the Slight and Contempt which is put upon Religion by some, and that Coldness and Indifference with which it is entertained by others, and in general that visible Decay of true Zeal and Piety we observe and lament in the World, than the Disuse of serious and instructive Discourse in Conversation. It is a very great, and, in its Consequences, a very fatal Point gained by the Libertine, when he could not prevail on Men of Virtue and Sobriety wholly to give up their Religion, yet to persuade them to confine it to the Temple and the Closet; to limit it to set Times, to certain and those narrow Bounds, out of which it should be improper and ridiculous. For, when once Men had banished Religion from so large a Share of their Time, as is taken up in Conversation, the more solemn Returns of it not only grew burdensome and disaffecting from the Intermission; but the vicious and profane Liberties,

which aſſumed its Place in Diſcourſe, left ſuch a Stain on the Minds of Men, as indiſpoſed them for the good Effects of our public Aſſemblies; by Degrees introduced in ſome a total Diſregard of all Religion, and in many debaſed the Remains of it with ſuch a Mixture of vicious Habits and Principles, as rendered it no better than a ſuperficial Pretence, unacceptable to God, and ineffectual to the great Ends propoſed in the Goſpel.

The firſt therefore and principal Benefit we may expect from reſtoring Religion to our Converſations, is the reviving the declining Senſe, and retrieving the Power of it; and that this Conduct may be as effectual to the Reformation, as the contrary has been to the Corruption of the World.

That theſe are no unreaſonable Hopes will appear, if we conſider the peculiar Advantages by which this Application is fitted to inſtruct our Ignorance, correct our Errors, and improve our Inclinations to Duty, more than either our public Inſtructions, or the private Applications of our Retirements, which, if we exclude Religion from our Converſations are the only Methods left for theſe Effects.

As to public Inſtructions, it is obſervable that what we hear in Converſation has this general Ad-

vantage here, as Discourses, than in the latter we are apt to attend more to the Beauty and Elegance of the Composure, than to the Matter delivered; to look upon them as the Effects of Labour and Art, and to consider ourselves rather as Judges of the Skill and Abilities of the Preacher, than as receiving Directions for our Life and Actions. These are indeed great Abuses of such excellent Means of Grace and Spiritual Improvement, but such as we fear will never wholly be removed, while Men have the common Passions and Vanities of human Nature about them; whereas the Instructions we receive in Conversation, are infinitely less subject to these Abuses: we are there in no Expectation of an accurate Performance; the Person who speaks is not considered as distinguished by any Station or Office, but as upon a Level with the rest of the Company, and prepared as well to receive, as to give Instruction: and as every One is permitted and expected to reply in his Turn, the Attention is unavoidably engaged to the Matter and Argument, and not diverted by fruitless Criticisms on the Skill or Address of the Orator.

It is to be observed further in this Comparison, that public Instructions are liable to be mistaken, or not understood by the Hearers. That which is

plain to one Capacity may be intricate and unintelligible to another. He has a great many Objections to propoſe, Doubts to be reſolved, & Queſtions to be anſwered, before he can apprehend or ſubmit to the Force of the Argument. Now, in Converſation we have Opportunity of ſatisfying all our Scruples, of having what is obſcure to us explained, what is doubtful confirmed, and being delivered from all Poſſibility of Error or Miſtake. Neither can our private Applications to reading or Meditation ſupply theſe Defects in our public Inſtructions, but are liable to the ſame Inconveniencies that they are. An Author cannot anſwer our Objections, or be more particular in the Explication of his Meaning, than he that ſpeaks from the Pulpit. — But

I go on to obſerve further, that in one very important Part of Inſtruction, the reforming the looſe and vicious, private Admonitions are without Compariſon the moſt effectual Method; for public Reproofs of Sin delivered from the Pulpit are, and for many neceſſary Reaſons ought to be, GENERAL, though by this they loſe a great Deal of their Effect to particular Men; for even well-diſpoſed Minds are contented to apply very little of them to themſelves: but in private Converſations the Application may be more perſonal: the Reproofs when ſo directed

directed come Home, and cannot be declined, the Sinner is, as it were, taken in the Fact, and cannot avoid the Charge. Nay, if it be considered, how seldom Men of wicked Principles and dissolute Lives can be prevailed on to attend our public Assemblies, and by how many strong Prejudices their Ears are stopped, and their Hearts hardened against any Impression from what is there delivered, we can have very little Hope of reclaiming them by this Method of Instruction. But if Religion were once generally introduced into our Conversations, as they could not avoid sometimes hearing their Duty and their Faults, so the Friendship of the Company would give the Application a favourable Access to their Minds, unobstructed by those Aversions which prepossess them against the public Ministry. To which let me here add, that if Religion were restored to its proper Share in our Conversations, that secret Confidence of the Sinner that others are as wicked as himself, though better concealed, and which perhaps is the greatest Support to Infidelity, would be entirely taken off. He has been taught to ridicule our public Assemblies, as things only of Form and Fashion as a Trade in the Preacher, and either Custom or Hypocrisy in his Hearers: and in these Sentiments he has been very

much confirmed, by obſerving that at other Times they can forget their Piety, and appear as little confined in their Mirth as the reſt of the Company: from hence he has been tempted to believe, that they had really as little Religion as himſelf, but only leſs Courage to own their Infidelity. But when ſuch a Man ſhall obſerve us at all Times the ſame, and that we carry our Religion always along with us, he muſt acquit us of Diſguiſe and Hypocriſy, and be convinced that we are in earneſt in our Profeſſion, that our Virtue is the fixt Principle and conſtant Habit of our Minds. And when he ſees Men of as fair Titles to Senſe and Reputation as himſelf, behave themſelves as ſeriouſly convinced of their Duty, it muſt ſhock his Infidelity, and make him ſuſpect his Confidence, and think it worth his while to re-examine the Arguments of Religion, and conſider more attentively whether he be not miſtaken.

To cloſe this Argument: In Converſation the Tempers of Men are open and acceſſible, their Attention is awake, and their Minds diſpoſed to receive the ſtrongeſt Impreſſions; and what is ſpoken is generally more affecting, more appoſite to particular Occaſions; and though leſs accurate, yet expreſſed with more Life and Spirit, than is uſually

found

found in the Composure of the Closet. And it is Pity, Opportunities so improvable to the greatest and most important Purposes of Religion, should be either thrown away on Trifles, or abused to the Promotion of Vice and Immorality, and the things which might be so much to our Advantage, be made the Occasion of our falling.

Give me leave then, in Conclusion of what I have offered, to exhort and intreat you with the Apostle, to let your Conversation be agreeable to this excellent Rule he has here prescribed us. "Only let your Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ." — "Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth."

Religion certainly is the most excellent Topic for Conversation, but withal the least regarded, and might justly challenge to have very much said of it here, because so very little is said of it at large in the World; there cannot be a greater Mark of an universal Decay of Piety than the Neglect of such Discourse in common Conversation: we find enough of Religion in Men's Heads to minister Strife and Dispute, but not enough of it in their Hearts to engage them to think of it affectionately, and to speak of it with Zeal and Reverence: the Charge of Hypocrisy and Stiffness runs so high against re-

ligious Talkers, that give but a Man that Character, and you will go near to ruin his Credit in Life.

True indeed it is, that Religion hath frequently been made a Cloak for Knavery to work under, and under this Diſguiſe, hath always been able to do the moſt Miſchief; but if the Abuſe of any thing were an Argument againſt the Uſe of it, that Argument would extend to every thing; every thing in this Life muſt be laid aſide, and chiefly the beſt things, becauſe they are generally applied to the worſt Purpoſes. To decline therefore any Part of Religion for Fear of being eſteemed Hypocrites, is actually to incur Damnation for Fear of its being thought that we ſhall incur it; and however ſome Men may talk piouſly in Order to act impiouſly to greater Advantage, yet certain it is, that were Men generally better Talkers, they would likewiſe generally be better Livers. It is not indeed always out of "the Abundance of the Heart that the Mouth ſpeaketh," yet the Abundance of the Heart will utter itſelf; and where is no good Diſcourſe, there is certainly no Fund of Goodneſs within.

As to the Charge of Stiffneſs and Formality, it is very improperly applied to religious Diſcourſe, becauſe they are Terms which ſignify an unneceſſary Severity; and however ſevere Religion may ſeem

in ſome Articles, it is certainly not unneceſſary in any of them; on the contrary, it furniſhes out the moſt neceſſary Topics of Diſcourſe, becauſe on its Articles our eternal Welfare depends; it furniſhes out likewiſe the moſt refined & exalted Topics, becauſe it takes-in the tranſcendent Glory and Purity of the divine Attributes, the Wonders of the Creation, the much greater Wonders of Redemption, the Beauty, the Wiſdom, and Power of Providence, the lively Notices of Virtue & Holineſs, the ſplendid Hopes of Bliſs and Immortality: Religion enriches the Soul with the moſt bright Ideas of whatever is excellent, and engages our Performances in the moſt noble Scenes of Action. Were Men but inclined to talk together of their eternal Concerns with the ſame Freedom and Affection as they do of their temporal; were they to apply the ſame Brightneſs of Fancy, the ſame Elegance of Expreſſion, the ſame Delicacy of Wit, the ſame Force of Argument to religious Truths, as they employ with Reſpect to worldly Buſineſs and Amuſements, our Converſation would then become heavenly, not only in Point of Holineſs, but in Point of Pleaſure and Satisfaction alſo: Men would be to one another as the Angels of God, and Piety would appear, as it really is, an amiable and an ornamental Qualification. (*) It

(*) Religious Diſcourſe ſhould be eaſy and unaffected, to ſhow that it is the natural Outgoings of the Soul, the true Bent and genuine Diſpoſition of the Mind; it ſhould be cheerful, to ſhew that

It may seem strange to apologise for, and enforce religious Peace and Joy are the Effects which Religion hath upon us, and by that Means to engage others to make Religion their Study and Business, that it may have the like Effects of Pleasure and Comfort upon them; it should be apposite, otherwise it will appear forced and constrained, & consequently disagreeable: Time, Place, Occasion, Company, &c, are all to be taken into Consideration, otherwise religious Discourse may frequently make a very undue Mixture, and *Pearls be often Cast before Swine.*

What is said of religious Matters will likewise bid fair for having a good Effect, when it is short; many Occurrences may excite a pious Remark, but would very improperly engage a long Discourse: Conversation is most entertaining, when Subjects as well as Persons have all their proper Share in it, when a few Words convey strong Ideas, and more is implied by them than expressed. Religion is at best thought an insipid Sort of Discourse, and it is a great Chance if it be not quite nauseated, when Tediousness is added to the Prejudices Men already entertain against it; a lively Expression touches the Heart irresistibly, but a long Lecture is apt to tire the Ears too much to find any farther Passage: above all, let our Actions speak the Praises of Religion, and our good Discourse be backed with good Living. To take God's Covenant in our Mouth, at the same Time that our Hands deal with Wickedness, is the severest Reproach we can cast upon Religion. — It may indeed be turned as an Argument for Religion, that in this Case Men are even forced to confess it against themselves; but the World will scarcely be brought into that Way of conceiving, they pay a much greater Regard to Men's Actions than their Words, and form their Judgment of things much more upon Example than Precept: it would therefore give great Weight and Influence to what we say, if the Holiness of our Lives came up to the Piety of our Talk; tho' on the other Hand it must be confessed, that it would be too great a Check to good Discourse, if Men were obliged to say no more of Religion than they really practiced.

religious Discourse in a Christian Country; but it has plainly fallen into such an entire Disuse among us, that the Revival of it will require all prudential Management, and it must be Matter of Address to bring it into Life again with any Advantage.

Though Men have forgot their Duty with Respect to Religion, they have not so entirely forgot Religion itself, but they can talk of it with Irreverence, and treat it with Defiance and Mockery: great Part of common Talk now is in the highest Degree corrupt; the Obscenities and Prophanesses which have so large a Share not only in common, but even in what is called polite Discourse, shew there is great Occasion to inculcate this Precept of the Apostle, since Mankind do so wonderfully mistake the proper Topics, and instead of such Conversation as Reason might improve by, and Holiness take delight in, they fall into the basest Corruptions, as though they were labouring, in Point of Conversation, to transform themselves into the worst of Beings.

It has been the constant Practice of all Ages to complain of the superior Viciousness of the present Times, because Men fix upon the most reigning Vice, and compare the present & the former Times with Respect only to that particular; and certainly

impure and irreligious Diſcourſe is become extremely faſhionable among us, far above the Practice of former Ages. (*)

As to obſcene Diſcourſe, it is utterly abhorrent to common Decency and good Manners; it is poiſonous indeed, but withal ſo very odious, that to well-diſpoſed Perſons it carres with it its own Antidote: and he who does not nauſeate it, muſt have a Mind extremely vicious and corrupt; but the Luxury with which it is generally uttered and received, ſhews that Mankind are at this Time fond of taking in the very Dregs of Pollution.

Prophane

(*) There ſeems to be one Way of forming a Judgment of what common Diſcourſe was in any Age, [viz.] from the Stage-entertainments which were then in Vogue; for they, being intended to repreſent common Life, do generally ſpeak the Language of the Times in which they were wrought and acted; and, what is a wonderful Reproach to us, the Plays which ſeem to give the greateſt Satisfaction at preſent, turn almoſt wholly upon Corruption and Impiety. They thus far indeed come up to their Character, that they repreſent what common Life now is; but it would be more to our Credit and Advantage if they were to repteſent rather what it ought to be. Without Doubt corrupt Communication inſinuates wonderfully among us by their Means, and Poſterity, (if ever their Performances come to the Hands of Poſterity,) will find us repreſented in them under very unfavourable Colours. If therefore the abſolute Unlawfulneſs of ſuch Entertainments be thought too ſevere a Doctrine, yet this we may affirm, that were not only Chriſtianity, but even common Modeſty and Virtue, to direct our Choice of thoſe Entertainments, the Stage could not at all ſubſiſt upon its preſent Foot.

Prophane Diſcourſe is a Vice, that of all others has the leaſt Foundation; for it is ſurprizing, that amidſt all thoſe bright and exalted Characters, under which we may and ought continually to view and adore the Divine Majeſty, we will nevertheleſs be labouring to turn his Being and Attributes, his Word and his Works into Ridicule and Contempt, and that this ſhould be eſteemed a great Degree of Wit and good Senſe.

There is indeed a Sort of Wit which conſiſts in joining together very deſperate Ideas; as when grand Affairs are put into a degrading Light, or trifling Affairs are mentioned under grand Circumſtances. Now jeſting in ſacred Matters is certainly joining together very deſperate Ideas; but if this is done without ſomething of Reaſon to ſupport it, it is not then Wit, but Abſurdity. In common Life Matters of a more ſerious Nature will not bear to fall under Ridicule: to have a Buffoon determining upon Life and Death; a Man behaving merrily in the extremeſt Dangers, &c. are Circumſtances entirely out of Character, and plainly beſpeak Folly and Madneſs: but how much more ſo is it in divine Matters? to ſee a Worm endeavouring to out-brave Omnipotence; to ſee a Man that is cruſhed before the Moth, contemning the Majeſty of Heaven, and

ridiculing infinite Perfection, trifling about his eternal Welfare, and jesting with eternal Damnation, are monstrous Instances of absurd & daring Iniquity. But thus it is that Men suffer themselves to be deceived in what is fashionable, (especially if what is fashionable be likewise wicked,) that they will extravagantly approve and act over that in their most important Concerns, which common Reason would condemn in the very lowest Affairs of Life; they will form the slightest and weakest Judgment there, where they ought to employ the utmost Caution and Exactness; and rather than not gratify a wanton vicious Humour, they will give up the very Principles of common Sense. But however they may deceive themselves, God is not mocked; the Almighty will at length pour infinite Vengeance upon the prophane for all their impious Jestings and foolish talking; and however industriously they avoid the Character of Hypocrites here, they will not be able hereafter, without a very severe Repentance, to ward-off the partaking with Hypocrites in their Punishments, "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth."

As to that Branch of Discourse, which was recommended in Candour and Benevolence, we ought to think and speak of Mankind agreeably hereto, to

be slow to hear ill Reports, to be slower yet to believe them, and never to be Authors & Promoters of them; to rejoice in the Excellencies we see our Neighbours possessed of, and cheerfully to bear a modest Testimony to their Merit; a modest Testimony, for Commendation may exceed in Point of Prudence, when it does not exceed in Point of Justice; and large Praises frequently raise the Envy of those who hear them, and are answered with Detraction; it is our Duty to clear up the Reputation of those who are unjustly traduced, and to smooth over those Characters, which Truth might censure, though Charity ought not; to throw a Veil of Tenderness over those Faults, which are not notorious, and to endeavour a Remedy of Men's Imperfections without exposing them to the Public.

In Short, we ought to conceive and speak of others in the same Manner as we shall wish to have done at that Day, when what we thought of in private shall be made as clear as the Light, and what we uttered in the Closets, shall be as though it were spoken on the House-tops. But how will the Slanderer and Backbiter appear at that Day, when the Secrets of all Hearts shall be disclosed, when traduced Innocence shall shine forth in the Brightness of Glory, and the Guilt of the Defamer

be shewn in the Blackness of Pride and Malice; when every Agravation whereby they have heightened their Neighbour's Faults, every Instance of Detract on whereby they have lessened their Neighbour's Excellencies, every Act of contemptuous Derision, of uncharitable though true Censure, every Omission of vindicating injured Characters, every industrious With-holding of due Commendation, will add to the Foulness of their own Demerits; when they shall be judged, even as they have judged; and be condemned, even as they have condemned, WITOUT MERCY.

With Regard to Ourselves, Let us reflect that we are Christians, that we are called by the Name of the Son of God, and baptized into an irreconcilable Enmity with Sin, the World, and the Devil; that therefore neither the Suggestions of our spiritual Enemy, nor the Insinuations of the World, should prevail with us to do or comply with any thing, how customary soever, which may prejudice the Interest we have sworn to promote, and cast Dishonour on our holy Profession. If either the Wit, the Figure, or the Friendship of wicked Men can engage us to assist or acquiesce in immoral Freedoms of a vicious Conversation; if either the Fear of offending, or the Care of pleasing Men,

can make us applaud the wicked, or laugh with the foolish, if we can patiently hear "Fools make a Mock at Sin," affront God whom we serve, and vilify the Religion by which we hope to be saved; be we assured that by whatever mannerly Names we may palliate the Offence, this is not Modesty but Cowardice, and a traiterous Desertion of our Allegiance to Christ; that it is "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open Shame;" a Crime for which we shall one Day be told we are unworthy of him.

Let us further reflect, that Religion is not the Business of some Fits only and Intervals of our Life, to be taken up at certain Times only, and laid aside when we please; but a System of Precepts to be regarded in ALL our Conduct, to direct us in public and private, in our Business and Diversions, in our Retirements and Conversations; and that all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, should either promote, or at least be consistent with our Observance of these Rules.

Let us remember, that God is present in all our Assemblies, that he remarks and treasures up against the Day of our Account every Word and Expression, with every Circumstance of our Behaviour in them. "By thy Words," (says our Saviour,) thou

ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy Words thou ſhalt be condemned." — And, if every idle Word ſhall be ſtrictly accounted for at the Tribunal of God and of Chriſt, where ſhall the diſſolute and prophane, the Liar, the Slanderer, and malicious, appear?"

Laſtly, — Let it not be thought that Religion is too barren or too melancholy a Subject for the Entertainment of a Chriſtian. It is indeed a Stranger to thoſe Follies which uſually paſs for the Diverſions of Company. It affords nothing to flatter the corrupt Paſſions, amuſe the Impertinence, or ſport with the Vanity of Men. But the Subjects it offers us, as they are great and noble in the Theory, and every Way ſuited to the Dignity of our Underſtanding; ſo every Step we take in the Conſideration of them, diſcovers ſo wiſe and ſo affectionate Concern in God for our Happineſs, and opens ſuch animating Views to our Faith, as muſt fill the Mind with a manly and rational Pleaſure, a Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory. And if Diſcourſes on theſe Subjects are burdenſome or inſipid to Men, it is a ſtrong Suſpicion their Lives are ſuch as render Religion and Futurity uneaſy Proſpects to their Fears. It is no Wonder indeed if wicked Men prefer the light Flaſhes of a wanton Mirth, which for a while ſuſpend Reflection and hide the Sinner from himſelf,

to such Discourses as awaken Conscience, and "prophesy no Good concerning them," but only evil continually. Or, if Men of Virtue are at any Time guilty of so much Weakness, as to appear displeased with a serious and instructive Conversation, it cannot be from an Aversion to the Argument; for it is impossible they should really be offended with such Subjects as are the great Entertainment of their Retirement: but it must proceed from too great a Concern for the Uneasiness of the Company, and Want of Courage to oppose a corrupt and unreasonable Custom. But if Men had Resolution enough to attempt it, these foolish Discouragements would soon be removed.

If good Men, with the Liberty of an honest Zeal, opposed & reproved all profane & immodest Freedoms in Conversation, Veneration & Respect would attend course be, in Comparison of what it now most frequently is! (*)

Certainly, it would then be so refined, so resembling of Heaven, that no unclean thing, in any Respect, could be permitted to enter into it; but "all things that offend or hurt, would be gathered out."

Men

(*) See Tillotson's Serm. vol. 2. on the present State of Conversation.

shalt be justified, and by thy Words thou shalt be condemned." — And, if every idle Word shall be strictly accounted for at the Tribunal of God and of Christ, where shall the dissolute and prophane, the Liar, the Slanderer, and malicious, appear?"

Lastly, — Let it not be thought that Religion is too barren or too melancholy a Subject for the Entertainment of a Christian. It is indeed a Stranger to those Follies which usually pass for the Diversions of Company. It affords nothing to flatter the corrupt Passions, amuse the Impertinence, or sport with the Vanity of Men. But the Subjects it offers us, as they are great and noble in the Theory, and every Way suited to the Dignity of our Understanding; so every Step we take in the Consideration of them, discovers so wise and so affectionate Concern in God for our Happiness, and opens such animating Views to our Faith, as must fill the Mind with a manly and rational Pleasure, a Joy unspeakable and full of Glory. And if Discourses on these Subjects are burdensome or insipid to Men, it is a strong Suspicion their Lives are such as render Religion and Futurity uneasy Prospects to their Fears. It is no Wonder indeed if wicked Men prefer the light Flashes of a wanton Mirth, which for a while suspend Reflection and hide the Sinner from himself,

to

attend them, and Religion would soon improve itself into a Fashion. The Libertine would retire to the Stews, and Profaneness be confined to the Brothel. Joy, and Peace, and Esteem, would bless the Dwellings of the Righteous; and the Purity and Holiness of his Conversation here, would prepare him for that heavenly Society, into which nothing unclean can enter.

I would only observe, (by Way of Conclusion,) that in exhorting to such a "Conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ," there is nothing, in any of the foregoing Respects, but what is highly becoming, &c. (under)

what is highly becoming with Regard to all the Duties and Ornaments of human Life. For,

The Design of Christianity is not to render Men less agreeable in civil Conversation, but to give it all the Brightness and Improvement possible.

What is required of us in our Intercourse with one another, as Christians, is most conducive to the Happiness of Society, & the Decorum which ought to be observed in it, if we considered ourselves merely as rational Creatures.

So that, if the Rules of Conversation, as have been here prescribed, were observed, and Men conversed mildly, charitably, and beneficently together, How lovely and desireable would all Intercourse be, in Comparison of what it now most frequently is! (*)

Certainly, it would then be so refined, so resembling of Heaven, that no unclean thing, in any Respect, could be permitted to enter into it; but "all things that offend or hurt, would be gathered out."

Men

(*) See Knox's Essays, No. 129, on the present State of Conversation.

Men would come into Company with infinitely more Pleasure than they do, if they were sure of hearing nothing which would shock them, as well as expected what would please them. When we know every Person that is spoken of, is represented by One who has no Ill-will, and every thing that is mentioned, described by One that is apt to set it in the best Light, the Entertainment must be delicate.

Beautiful Pictures are the Entertainments of pure Minds, as Deformities are of the corrupted. It is a Degree towards the Life of Angels, when we enjoy Conversation in which there is nothing presented but in its Excellence: And a Degree towards that of Demons, wherein nothing is shown but in its Degeneracy and Corruption. (*)

"The benevolent Man, then, openeth not his Ear unto Slander; the Faults and Failings of Men give Pain to his Heart.

"His Desire is to do good, and he searcheth out the Occasions thereof.

"He enjoyeth the Ease and Tranquility of his own Breast, and rejoiceth in the Good and Happiness of his Neighbour.

"From

(*) "The Discourse of a godly Man is always pure; but a Fool changeth with the Moon."

"From the Largeness of his Mind he comprehendeth in his Wishes the Happiness of all Men; & from the Generosity of his Heart, he endeavours to promote it."

Sermon

Colos. iii. 9. "Lie not one to another."

SERMON CXVIII.

Againſt Lying.

Coloſ. iii. 9. "Lie not one to another."

The Honour, the good Name and Reputation, the Right and Property of a Man, are things of ſo exceeding Conſequence to him, that we find Men every where moſt ſtrenuouſly to endeavour by all Means, if poſſible, to defend it from all Attacks and Injuries whatever: It cannot, therefore, but be a great Inducement to all Men ſincerely to embrace the Precepts of Religion, and be a mighty Comfort and Conſolation to them, when they reflect how agreeable they are to the common Maxims of the reaſonable Part of Mankind. "Lie not one to another."

Had God, after the firſt Formation of all things, given us a Law that contradicted the Nature of our Beings, there would be ſome reaſonable Ground & Pretence for the Neglect of Religion; but now that every Precept of it, ſome Way or other, tends to make us holy and happy; and ſecures to us, and to all Men, what we value above all things, what can be

to forbid this Practice, as a violation of holy and indispensable a Precept: Do not one to another.

Lying being that by which we contract so much Guilt to Ourselves, and create Evil to Others, it is not without exceeding Benignity that we are forbad it by the good Spirit of God; and great Ingenuity that we abstain from it ourselves. Heathens as well as Christians, Men of all Ranks and Professions, of all Sects & Religions whatever, have agreed in this, that there is an eternal Obligation founded in the Nature of things, (which every Man that attends to the Dictates of his Reason and Conscience, cannot but own and be sensible of,) that our Words should be agreeable to our Thoughts, and have been sensible that Lying, or endeavouring to deceive each other, is a base and mean Practice, unworthy the Dignity of a rational Nature, and highly displeasing to God, who has given us the Use of that noble Faculty of Speech to this very End, that it might be the Interpreter of our Thoughts to each other.

This is what every Man understands, and readily assents to; but then WHAT may be properly called a LIE, and HOW FAR the Obligation of speaking Truth extends, hath been much disputed among learned Men.

(*) As Grotius

Many have been of the Opinion, that it doth not bind us in all Circumſtances; and it is certain there have been many alledged, (*) wherein not only the Heathen Moraliſts, but many ancient Chriſtian Writers alſo, have thought Men not under any Obligation to ſpeak Truth.

That the abuſing the Power of Speech to the Damage and ſubverting of all civil Society, (when on the Contrary it was given us on Purpoſe to be the Bond of Society;) that This is a great and crying Sin, is readily acknowledged by all: But whether the making uſe of Speech to deceive another in Caſes in which it may ſeem that ſome publick Good is promoted by it; whether This be ſuch an Abuſe of Speech as will come under the Notion of a ſinful Lie, is not ſo obvious to determine. — In diſcourſing therefore upon this Subject, I ſhall,

First endeavour to ſtate clearly the Nature of a Lie, & what may be properly ſo called. And then,

II. Conſider the Caſes of Difficulty ariſing on it. Concluding with the Motives and Reaſons againſt it.

As to the Nature of this Sin, in general, it is the ſpeak-

(*) As Grotius obſerves.

ſpeaking what we know to be falſe, and has generally conjoined with it an Intention to defraud: And for the particular Kinds of it, in ſome of them they are moſt highly aggravated.

The proper Notion of a Lie, is an endeavouring to deceive another, by ſignifying that to him as true, which we ourſelves think not to be ſo.

Every Word we ſpeak, that anſwers to this Deſcription, is a Lie; But whatever fails in any Part of this Definition, however blameable it may be, on other Accounts, yet is not properly a Lie, nor cenſurable as ſuch. — Let us view it a little more particularly. — As firſt,

It is ſignifying That to another as true, which we ourſelves think not to be ſo: For it is this Difference between our Words and the Judgment of our Minds, in which our Falſehood conſiſts.

For Inſtance, If a Man THINKS a thing to be true, and relates it to others as ſuch, tho' in the Event it ſhould prove really not to be true, yet this is not a Lie, but only an Error. For here it is plain the Perſon himſelf is deceived, and hath no Intention to impoſe upon another.

Whatever, therefore, is amiſs here, is accidental and involuntary; and all the Fault he is guilty of in it, is Raſhneſs and Haſtineſs of Speech, in too poſitively

strively declaring That to be true, which he has not taken sufficient Care to be duly informed of.

On the contrary, if a Man thinks a thing not to be true, and yet declares it to another as certain; tho' in the Event the thing should chance to prove true, yet since he knew it not, and believed it not to be so, his Act is still the same, and it is doubtless, nevertheless, a Lie.

Thus a thing may be really an Untruth in itself, and yet not be a Lie in the Reporter, because spoken according to the best of his Knowledge. And, for the same Reason, he may be deep in this Guilt, tho he accidentally communicates a Truth to others.

But then,

2dly. It was added, that to complete the Notion of a Lye, this false Report of any thing contrary to our own Belief of it, must be "with an Intention to deceive."

This Deceit and Design of imposing upon others is the very Point, in which the Essence and Guilt of Lying consists. This Intention to deceive is so necessary a Circumstance, that without it the former Part would be imperfect, & might not be criminal. It is possible we may say many things, which, according to the strict Letter of them, may not be exactly suitable to our own Judgment, and yet we may be

be clear of any Breach of Truth in it; not only as NOT INTENDING to deceive any, but as KNOWING CERTAINLY, that no One will in Fact be deceived by them.

Thus Fables, Parables, Allegories, and FIGURATIVE Expressions, with all useful Forms or Schemes of Rhetorick, tho they seem to signify That as true, which is not literally so, yet can by no Means be accounted Lies.

These Forms of Speech are justified, as being well-known, and allowed to bear an INWARD Meaning. The Design of them is well understood as an useful Method of more easily conveying Instruction to the meanest Apprehensions. (*) The

(*) See No. 183 of the Spectator. — Reading is to the Mind, what Exercise is to the Body; as by One, Health is preserved, strengthned and increased; so by the Other, Virtue, which is the Health of the Mind, is kept alive, cherished and confirmed. But as Exercise becomes tedious and painful, when we make use of it only as the Means of Health, so Reading is apt to grow uneasy and burdensome, when we apply ourselves to it only for our Improvement in Virtue. For this Reason, the Virtue which we gather from a Fable, Allegory, from a moral or instructive Novel, is like the Health we get by recreating Exercise; which, engaging us in an agreeable Pursuit, draws us on with Pleasure, and makes us insensible of the Fatigues that accompany it.

Sunt bona, sunt quædam mediocria, sunt mala plura
Quæ legis. — Poetarum, agitur, optimæ Sententiæ discendæ, et
ne utiliter præcepterunt legenda sunt; sed si quid apud eos acurrit, quod

Serm. CXVIII. *bonis*

The Truth lies in the Substance of the thing re-
presented,

*Invis Mortalibus, et Caſſilatis repagulis, ter omnia præterviſo, quæ ſola mi-
ſia capere decet. — Ut Apes ex Floribus nihil aliud ſumunt, præter Odorem
et Colorem: Sic decet Studioſos ex Poetarum Lectione ea tantùm quæ ad
Mores ſtruendos conferunt, ex ſparciſſimis Fabulis allegere.*

But, — The Misfortune is, that in reading Romances, Women, (who are moſtly addicted this Way,) do not only learn the Evil they ſhould be ignorant of, but alſo the moſt delicate Ways of committing it.

*Ut in his Locis ubi quàm naſcuntur Herbæ ad Remedium efficaces, in
iiſdem multæ naſcuntur lethales: ſic in Poetis multa præclara, multa peſti-
fera. Igitur, ut non ſtatim a quovis bibendum eſt Fonte, ne Valetudinem aut
Fortunam offendat: Ita, non eſt tutum quemvis Librum evolvere, ne Vitiorum
Contactus Animum inde contaminetur.* — The Benefit of *Writing* is great,

(*Sic ſerat et ſeriem ſeriat mens, lingua, Vocem,*
Et pergit Linguæ Charta Manuſque Vices.)

but the too general Uſe of it, in Novels and Romances, is only to convey down to lateſt Poſterity, the heated Deſigements of the Writer's Heart; which, were they not in this Way made *laſting*, would, perhaps, have periſhed, even in Remembrance, with the Perpetrators of them: Whereas, *now*, they remain as Poiſon to future Generations, (*Libra ſcripta manent,*) and when the Actors of them ſhall be lamenting, in Torments, their own evil Deeds, their defiling Works will be ſeducing others into the ſame Place of Torment, to increaſe their Miſery in it. See No. 166. of the Spectator.

Qui legitis Flores, et Humi naſcentia Fragra,
Frigidus, O Puero! fugite hinc, latet Anguis in Herbâ.
Horreſco, referens, — mihi dulcis Amor dominatur eſſis;
Non tuus Rex agitur: Pœna ſolenda venit.

Men ought to be more conſiderate in *Writing*, than in *Speaking*; becauſe a raſh, and an indiſcreet *Word* may be corrected ſoon: but that which is *written*, cannot be denied or amended but with Infamy.

There is a thing in the World, if it is poſſible, incomprehenſible: A Perſon that appears dull, lettiſh, and ſtupid, knows neither how to

ſpeak,

speculated, not in the Form of the Representation. Even Words themselves have, we know, no natural Ideas but such only as Use, and Custom, and general Agreement, have put upon them. Whilst therefore, we do not falsify them contrary to their known Import, or make use of them to mislead others, we are sufficiently justified in them.

We frequently in Holy Scripture itself, find the Divine Nature represented to us under corporeal Similitudes: we find Eyes and Hands, and other Figures of human Bodies ascribed to God; which Expressions, all Men well understand to be only in Way of Condescension to us, a Help to the Imperfection of our Understandings; to express his infinite Perfections, his Knowledge and his Power, in such a Way, as we think and conceive of these things in ourselves.

In

speak, nor relate what he has seen; but if he sets to write, no Man does it better; he makes Animals, Trees, and Stones, talk; and his Words are full of Elegance, natural Sense and Delicacy.

It is to be, that the present Age is more barren than the preceding, the great Multiplication of Novels has probably contributed to its Degeneracy. Every Corner of the Kingdom is abundantly supplied with them. In vain is Youth secluded from the Corruptions of the *living* World: *Books* are commonly allowed them, with little Restriction, as innocent Amusements: yet these often pollute the Heart in the Recesses of the Closet, inflame the Passions at a Distance from Temptation, and teach all the Malignity of Vice in Solitude.

In all such Ways of speaking as these, we always have Reason to presume, that those we speak to, will understand our Words in the same Sense as we do.

The great Rule, therefore, is, that we keep within the customary Significations of Words, and desire fairly to be rightly understood. If we aim not at DECEIVING others, we are at Liberty in the Choice of our Expressions; but, if we design to falsify, no Excuse can justify us.

As to CHANGE of MIND upon a new Thought, or better Reflection, or to oblidge our Friends upon their strong and pressing Importunity, we have many Examples to excuse, if not to justify us herein: — PETER, after having positively asserted, that Christ should never wash his Feet, not only afterwards consented to it, but even offered his whole Body for the Purpose, "Lord, not only my Feet, but also my Hands and my Head."

The same is represented to us by our Lord, under the Parable of the two Sons, (*) — Higher yet;

The holy Angels, (whose Examples we are commanded to follow,) are to us Precedents herein, precisely in the Case.

"And there came two Angels to Sodom at Even, and

(*) Matt. xxi. 28, &c.

and how at the Gate of Sodom; and Lot seeing them, rose up to meet them, and he bowed himself with his Face towards the Ground, and he said, Behold, now my Lords, turn in, I pray you, into your Servant's House, and tarry all Night, and wash your Feet, and you shall rise up early, and go on your Ways. And they said, Nay, but we will abide in the Street all Night. And he pressed upon them greatly, and they turned in unto him, and entered into his House, and he made them a Feast, and did bake unleavened Bread, and they did eat. But further,

There are several Species or Kinds of Lying [viz.] (according to the useful and well known Distinction of them,) the Jocose, officious, or pernicious; or (in other Words,) such as are calculated to do our Neighbour a Prejudice, or to do him a Service, or, without any View to either, such as are told merely for Entertainment and Amusement.

As to Jocose Lies, (as they are so called,) they are not of so malicious and evil a Nature as either of the others; they are, indeed, so small in Comparison, that there have been Patrons to defend them, as not Way sinful, but harmless and lawful.

Such Untruths as are told by vain Persons in a JESTING Manner, and in which there is no Deceit;

cannot in the strict and most proper Sense of the Word, be called Lies. For though all such Discourse may justly seem Unbecoming the Gravity of a Christian, and may perhaps be properly enough ranked under that foolish Jesting, which St. Paul stiles "not convenient," or, as the Word may be rendred, UNBECOMING (Eph. v. 4.) Yet we cannot affirm that it is always strictly and absolutely unlawful. We often speak in an Ironical Manner, or there are in our Discourse such evident Signs and Marks, as plainly enough shew, that we meant it not in Earnest, and that we have no Design to deceive or impose upon the Person we converse with. For otherwise, if a Man really intends to delude another with a thing that is false, though but in Way of Humour and Abuse only, this is by no Means excusable upon any Ground. For to endeavour to deceive a Man by abusing his Credulity, in Order to expose him for it afterward, this is really an injurious Lie, and can no Way be excused by being told in Jest. "As a Madman who casteth Firebrands, Arrows and Death, so is the Man that deceiveth his Neighbour, and saith, am I not in Sport?"

Truth is of so sacred a Nature as not to be violated for the Sake of a Jest, or on Account of any Advantage to ourselves or others whatever.

Truth

Truth is one of the Excellencies of God; and to confound it upon the Excellency and Perfection of Man. Speech is one of the choicest Gifts which God hath given us, to express our Minds uprightly and sincerely; To use this noble Faculty therefore contrary to the End and Design of it, for any Advantage or Jest whatever, is grossly abusing the Benignity of our Maker; and perverting his noble Gifts. Indeed, it requires no laboured Proof, but deserves only this further Remark, that we ought carefully to guard the Avenues to Truth, since all these Iniquities proceed by gradual Progress, lest we end even in those pernicious Lies, which are acknowledged by all to be heinous and detestible.

We should therefore use Plainness and Sincerity in all our Words, and abhor Falsehood and Dissimulation, and those more refined Ways of Lying, by Equivocation, and secret Reservations of our Minds, on Purpose to deceive. (*) A

(*) *Pars adaperta sit, Pars altera clausa Fenestræ.*

Words, as far as they reach, are designed for Windows to the Breast; their Business is to let in the Light, and to make the Mind transparent; they are the Pledges and Pictures of our Thoughts; and therefore ought not to be obscure or obsolete. Plain Truth must have plain Words; she is innocent, and accounts it no Shame to be seen without Disguise.

The Man of plain and honest Heart,
Through Life disdains a double Part.

Serm. CXVIII. The

A Man who is rightly honeſt, looks not to what he MIGHT do, but to what he OUGHT do. He wears always the ſame Countenance: & ſpeaks the Truth. His Cheeks are never ſtained with the Bluſhes of Recantation, nor does his Tongue faulter to make good a Lie with the ſecret Gloſſes of a double or reſerved Senſe: for, to deal truly is his delight."

If Equivocation and ſecret mental Reſervations were

He never needs the Screen of Lies
His inward Boſom to diſguiſe.
In Vain malicious Tongues aſſail.
Let Envy ſnarl, let Slander rail,
From Virtue's Shield, (ſecure from Wound,)
Their blunted venom'd Shafts rebound.
So ſhines his Light before Mankind,
His Actions prove his honeſt Mind.

Whereas, the Hypocrite, or Double-dealer, ſhelters and hides himſelf in Ambiguities and Reſerves. — *Simplicis nos ſit integros eſſe decet.*

Although it may ſometimes for very good Reaſons be allowable, when we uſe ſuch Words as are fairly capable of different Meanings, to uſe them in any one of thoſe Senſes, although it be probable that the Perſons ſpoken to, will take them in another; (tho this may ſometimes be allowable, where a Man ſo orders his Actions, as thereby to conceal from another his Deſigns, which That Other has no Right or juſt Ground to expect to be acquainted with, for no Man is obliged always to diſcover his whole Mind; ſo doubtful Ways of expreſſing himſelf are often one of the beſt Means of concealing it;) yet great Prudence and Caution is to be uſed in this Matter; and above all things we ought to take heed, that we fall not by Degrees into thoſe deceitful & pernicious Equivocations, which tend manifeſtly to the Subverſion of all human Society.

circumstanced: when he might even swear, that he never did a thing which he had certainly done, if he but use the Discretion to keep these Circumstances in his Mind, [viz.] that he did not do it such a Day, or before he was born: - or by reserving to himself some other resembling Circumstance, which can never be discovered by the Language of his Discourse. What a Latitude is This for downright Lying, and Perjury? - What a Contrivance to undermine the Foundations of Truth, and eradicate the very Essence of Sincerity. Indeed, these Reserves and pernicious Disguises are so far from being to be allowed, that a Man's Countenance may be untrue, as well as his Tongue, when the Signs of Affirmation or Denyal, of Assent or Refusal, of Pleasure or Dislike appear contrary to our Thoughts. This is showing false Colours, the being One thing WITHOUT, and Another WITHIN. A MUTE may be guilty of this Sin; for a Man may point, or look a Lie, as well as speak one.

As to officious Lies, or those which are intended for the Service of our Neighbour - this has occasioned great Controversy: the Goodnature of Men getting the better of their Reason, hath expounded This, with other Doctrines, to their own Tastes.

Many are the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel,

which have been thus treated: But, no Man who reads the Scriptures, and fairly consults his Heart in the Interpretation of them, but must stand amazed to hear it proposed as a Doubt, whether it be allowable in any Case, tho even for the Benefit of another, (*) — But,

If the PRECEPTIVE Passages of holy Scripture prohibit Lying, and the HISTORICAL Ones do not excuse

(*) As to some Passages of Scripture, to which Refuge is usually had on this Occasion, wherein some charitable *officious* Lies seem to have been practised without Censure, or with Appearance of Approbation, there are several competent Answers, which may be returned to it. — As first,

Several of these have, without Reason been presumed to be Untruths, and have appeared quite otherwise upon Examination, (as Exod. i. 19) which thing probaly was true, and might be accounted for by natural Causes, or by a particular Providence.

In the next Place, several of these Actions were of a mixed Nature, and that Part, which was commendable in them, may be mentioned with Applause, tho' some other Circumstances might not be altogether justifiable; as there are favourable Characters given in Scripture of several Persons, who were yet not unexceptionable in every Case.

This Observation may be applicable to the Case of *Rahab*; if we must admit that she bore the Title of *Harlot* in the *modern* Sense, which there is no Necessity of admitting, as the original Word is capable of a more gentle Meaning. — Again,

In some of these Cases, they were favoured with *immediate Directions from Heaven* for their Procedure, (see Vol. iii, Page 262,) and if their Conduct had otherwise been *doubtful*, this Circumstance made it *clear*; and when Others can produce the same Authority, and give the same Evidence of it, we will not dispute their Right to vary from the Truth.

must in them all imaginary Presumptions of our own Opposition to such Evidence, must be highly dangerous. But

Pernicious Lies, (i.e) the speaking what is false, in Order to defraud, or do Mischief to another; which yet are of all others the most generally practised: These, it is so evidently impossible to have any thing to much as pretended to be alledged in Justification or Excuse of them; they are so plainly and confessedly odious both to God and Men, (" lying Lips are an Abomination to the Lord, " and a righteous Man hateth Lying,) These are so manifestly hateful both in the Sight of God and all good Men; they tend so apparently to the Subversion of all Justice and Honesty, and consequently to the Destruction of all civil Society, that even some BARBAROUS Nations have made them severely punishable. The Consciences of Men do so naturally start at the Baseness and Meanness of This Practice, that nothing needs be said to convince their Judgments of the Sinfulness and Unlawfulness of it. They need only to have their PASSIONS moved, and their Consciences awakened, by being put in Mind, that the getting of Treasures by a lying Tongue, is a Vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek Death. For if Men will but give themselves Time

to think; they cannot but see, that if there be any such Thing as Right and Wrong; if there be any such Thing as Justice and Injustice, if there be any Obligation to maintain Faith and Truth amongst Men, to preserve Society, Order and good Government in the World; this Kind of Lying cannot but be, in the highest Degree, unnatural and unlawful; inasmuch as it hath a great Aggravation of Guilt, on Account of the Injustice which is involved in it, and bears Proportion to the Injury and Wrong that is done by it.

By This we may take away a Man's Life, which is Murder; or his Estate, which is Robbery.

When it hath such heinous Crimes as these involved in it, it is, and must needs be, a Sin of the first Magnitude. — But,

Perhaps, we may seldom meet with Lying thus aggravated. — Most Men are tender in these high Points; this Sin, therefore, is most commonly pernicious with Respect to a Man's Reputation and Credit, which is but too lightly esteemed by many.

We meet with many Complaints in the Old Testament of the Want of Truth and Faithfulness among Men; and, I am afraid, there is as much Reason for this Complaint now, notwithstanding we live

live in an Age of greater Light, which reproves and makes manifeſt this Work of Darkneſs.

Few Perſons, indeed, have the Effrontery to affirm what is directly falſe, what they know to be ſo, and may eaſily be detected in. — But,

There are ſo many Ways of miſrepreſenting Facts, that Men of fertile Inventions may eaſily find Means, on many Occaſions, of impoſing upon the Credulity of Others, without any extraordinary Ill Conſequence to the Prejudice of their Reputation. — But,

II. I am to conſider the Caſes of Difficulty arising on this Subject. — And firſt,

It is ſaid, that Artifices of diſguiſing the Truth are neceſſary to ſuch as propoſe to live in the World. — 2dly, That they are neceſſary to conceal Faults. — 3dly, That they ſometimes prevent Miſchief, and do Good. — and Laſtly, are neceſſary to overcome thoſe who have Deſigns againſt us.

As to the Firſt, it is a high Reflection on the Wiſdom of Providence to ſuppoſe, that it has made the Breach of any of its Laws unavoidable. There are, indeed, many Caſes, in which Lying may be thought advantageous, (as there are occaſionally Temptations to all Kinds of Vices,) but none, wherein it is neceſſary. — Indeed,

They can have no Proſpect of ſucceeding in their Deſigns, without putting on, at leaſt, the Appearance of Integrity, and affecting a plain, eaſy Manner, and an open Aſpect.

Although, in certain Inſtances, Men may find their Account more by practiſing the Arts of a deep Diſſimulation, than by a plain and ingenuous Freedom of Speech; yet, we may ſafely affirm, that Sincerity, (generally ſpeaking,) is the moſt eaſy, as well as ready and probable Means of Succeſs. (*)

With Reſpect to a Man's Reputation, (which, in all his Ways of Commerce in the World, is of ſo great Conſequence to him,) Sincerity muſt be allowed to have very much the Advantage of Diſſimulation. — But, What

(*) It muſt be confeſſed, indeed, it may ſometimes happen, that a Man's ſpeaking Truth will be an Hindrance to himſelf or another, when falſifying would turn to their Advantage; but then, This ariſes from the unhappy Circumſtances of that State, into which Men have brought themſelves by Sin. Were Men in a State of Innocence and Perfection, our Duty would be inſeparably united with our Intereſt, and there could be no Caſe wherein a Man's performing his Duty, could be any Diſadvantage either to himſelf or his Neighbour.

If therefore Men's Sins make no Alteration in their Obligations to moral Duties, and in an innocent World Truth would be confeſſedly our unalterable and univerſal Duty; It is hard to ſay why it ſhould not be ſo now, tho' the Sin and Corruption of Men it may ſo fall out, that Falſehood would promote our Intereſt, and that Truth muſt neceſſarily turn to our Diſadvantage.

now that we are principally to examine is not how far the Arts of Lying or Collusion may be of Use, either with Regard to the Interests or Reputation of Men, but whether we can reconcile them with the Maxims of our holy Religion. — For,

If we profess ourselves Christians, we are bound to govern our Conduct by the Laws of Christianity, & not by the Practice of a corrupt World, even tho the greatest Names could be brought from Record, out of Courts and Kingdoms, in all Ages, to support it. (*) — But,

2dly, Many Persons imagine it justifiable by these Means to conceal Faults. — But, this is so far from being pardonable; that some Faults ought not to be concealed at all; (‡) and none by this Method: for hereby we increase the Number of our Transgressions; and the second is not uncommonly worse than the first. (†) An

(*) Tho bad Customs, or an ill Example should proceed from Men in Power, and of Noble Birth; it cannot be a Sanction for others to copy after their Infamy.

(‡) See Page 103.

(†) *Qui mulat fatit semper aliquid fraudis. — Frustra multa praetendit.* He that tells a Fault, and then tells a Lie to hide it, makes it two. A Fault once confessed, is twice committed,

Non Ego mendosis ausim defendere Mores,
Falsaque pro Vitiis Arma movere meis.

An ingenuous Confeſſion will be likely, in moſt Caſes, to procure an eaſy Pardon; but a Lie is an exceeding Aggravation of an Offence, and perſiſting in it can very hardly be forgiven. — But, above all, if any, to hide what they have done amiſs themſelves, are ſo vile as to throw the Blame or Suſpicion of it upon another, This is the Height of Wickedneſs: and therefore, particularly, all Children and Servants, who are chiefly tempted to excuſe themſelves by theſe Ways, ought to undergo any thing, rather than be guilty of ſuch a Sin. And, (on the other Hand,) all Parents & Heads of Families, ought to beware of puniſhing them too ſeverely for their OTHER Offences, leſt they drive them into a Habit of This. — However,

3dly, It may perhaps at leaſt be thought that Lying, to prevent Miſchief and do Good, may be permitted. — In which Caſe, Men FANCY they may PRESUME upon another's Conſent, as WILLING to be deceived; that they would give up their Right by which they might exact Truth of us, did they know the Reaſons that moved us to deceive them.

To this Caſe may be referred thoſe PIOUS Frauds, when, without any apparent Injury to any Man, (as they THINK,) Men contrive certain Forgeries for the Promotion of Religion, (as they IMAGINE,) and for the Service of God. — But, If

If we may not, in ſuch Caſes, do any ſmall Evil, that Good may come of it; why ſhould it be thought lawful to Lie, though even for an Appearance of publick Advantage. Which PUBLICK Advantage is never indeed any thing elſe, but the preſent Intereſt of ſome particular Party or Faction. And as to Matters of Religion, it is certain nothing is more odious in the Sight of God, than to accept his Perſon, and ſpeak deceitfully for him, (as it is expreſſed, in Job.) God is Truth, and his Religion is Truth; and Men may as well undertake to make Light Darkneſs, or Darkneſs Light, as pretend to endeavour to advance the Truth of God, by making Lies and pious Frauds their Inſtrument. Thoſe who have been guilty in this Particular, have given great Occaſion to the Enemies of God to blaſpheme. For whilſt ſome ill-deſigning Men have pretended to advance the Intereſt of Religion, (i.e) their own Errours, by ſuch indirect Means; others have been tempted to think that the WHOLE is nothing but a Fiction; and that Religion itſelf has little Countenance from Truth, when its Profeſſors chooſe to make Lies their Refuge.

They, who allow themſelves in this, are uſually diſcovered & loſe their End: or, if not, will never know where to ſtop.

They will be enticed by Degrees to think every thing Good, that ſerves their Turn, let others think it ever ſo bad. Beſides, Others will think themſelves authorized by ſuch Examples to take the ſame Liberties; and thus all Truth and Probity will be loſt among Men; a much greater Evil, than any Good, which Falſehood may occaſionally ſerve, will ever compenſate. — And,

If telling Lies, even from theſe plauſible Inducements, be ſo bad; what muſt they be, when they proceed from leſs excuſable Ones? eſpecially, how deteſtable, when we are prompted to them by Malice, or under Reſentment, or any other totally wicked Principle, to cheat or defraud!

Sermon

SERMON CXIX.

On the same Subject.

Colos. iii. 9. "Lie not one to another."

Having already prefaced these Words, and explained from them the Nature of Lying, (what may, or may not, be properly so termed,) and also considered some of the Excuses, or Cases of Difficulty arising in this Case, I come now to the last of them, which hath been thought most considerable, and will therefore require a particular Discussion, [viz.]

The Case of those, to whom we have openly and solemnly declared ourselves Enemies, as in lawful and necessary War. These, some have thought, may not only be lawfully deceived by Feints and Stratagems, (for these are granted, on all Hands, to be unquestionably lawful,) but they have further contended, that it is allowable to make use of Contracts and Agreements, to the bringing about the same Design, or effect this Deceit by the use of Falsehood and Treachery, by breaking Promise, and the like. The Reason and Equity of which Manner of proceeding they

they IMAGINE to be This; that those who have openly professed themselves Enemies, have, (as they conceive,) forfeited all the Right they had to Truth, as they have to many other Parts of Justice, Charity, and other Virtues, which we are bound to exercise to others; and that therefore, as we may use all Means we can to annoy and endamage them, and may dispoil them of their Goods and even of Life itself, so they think we may also deprive them of the Benefits of Words and Contracts, without any Injury or Injustice.

Whether this can, with just and sufficient Reason, be done, will best appear by inquiring into the Nature of Truth, and the Foundation of our Obligation to speak always what we think agreeable to it; and the applying it to the Case before us. — Now,

They who think a Lie, (properly so called,) to be in this Case lawful, consider Truth merely as a civil Compact, to which Mankind tacitly consent, an Agreement, (as it were,) amongst Men, for their more convenient living together, to represent things to one another faithfully and as they really are. They look upon Truth as a Matter of private Concern, and one Man laid upon another all the Obligation he has to it, and consequently could release him from that Obligation either by his Fault, or his In-

capacity,

explicitly, or his Consent. Thus Truth becomes merely one and the same thing with Justice; and Falsehood ceases to be a Fault, unless when it is joyned with manifest Injury and Wrong.

From hence it follows, that, when a Man has forfeited, or voluntarily receded from his Right to any thing, it may, without Injustice, be with-held from him. In such Cases as these, (according to this Notion,) a Lie will seem to be no longer blame-worthy. — But now,

That we are, (on the contrary,) really under an Obligation to Truth, distinct from, & independent on that of mere Justice, may appear from the following Considerations.

First, That every Man's Conscience naturally convinces him, that he is under an Obligation to Truth, distinct from all other Considerations; so that it will not without Reluctance suffer him to deceive any Person with a Lie, even though he does not foresee any real Injury or Damage that will thereupon accrue to him. In the natural Judgment of our Minds, we cannot forbear thinking, that there is something in Truth that is great, and noble, and honourable; and something in Falsehood that is mean and base, unworthy of a Man, and which renders him contemptible and vile, even abstracted

from what Benefit or Mischief we may fancy will ensue; It is a Fault which always hides its Head, as being ashamed of itself, and may even be remitted to its own Convictions. Hence Lying has always been esteemed the Vice of Slaves and Vassals, of the meanest and most contemptible Persons: But Men of any Honour and Reputation, have always necessarily an Abhorrence and Detestation of it; so that though they should even be persuaded of the LAWFULNESS of it in any particular Cases, yet would they still avoid it in those very Cases as much as they could, and never practise it without Reluctance and Regret. — Now,

All This is very unaccountable, if Truth were nothing more but only a Part of Justice; For why then should it not be thought as honourable to spread a Lie at any Time for the PUBLICK Advantage, (which is a Vice that PARTIES and FACTIONS of Men are very apt to be guilty of) as to speak the Truth for the same End? And if all the moral Evil of Falsehood consisted only in the Injustice of it, why should it be thought dishonourable or base to make use of it in Cases where that Reason ceases, when it is certain all the REAL Dishonour of any Action CAN arise only from the Badness or moral Evil of it? — Wherefore,

Since even in such Cases, where we may avoid doing Injury, it is done by it, yet Nature nevertheless starts and recoils at Falsehood as at a thing unworthy of us, since we always feel a secret Judgment within our Minds, that moves and prompts us to Truth, & forcibly perswades us of its Obligation, since we feel an inward Satisfaction when we (strictly) practise it; and, (on the other Hand,) are ashamed when we have acted contrary to it. This shews us the native and genuine Excellency of Truth, considered simply in itself, and that the inward Sense of our Conscience is against all Falsehood and Lies: In a Word, this shews us that there is something sacred and divine in Truth, which will never suffer us to be discharged from its Obligation.—But,

2dly, That our Obligation to Truth, is distinct from that of merely not injuring others, appears further from this Consideration, that in our Notion of the supreme and most perfect Being, Veracity & Justice are two distinct Perfections or Attributes. For as Religion in general is an Imitation of the Life of God, so particular moral Virtues are Imitations and Transcripts of the divine Perfections.

Now, If the Veracity and Justice of God be not allowed to be distinct Perfections, it will not be easy to shew how God can be said to be absolutely

tainly "the God of Truth, and that cannot lie," as the Apostle stiles him; for then it must be granted that He might also represent things to us otherwise than they are, as well as Men may one to another; and might make false Revelations to his Creatures in all those Instances, wherein Men use Deceit one to another, (i.e.) where there appears no Injustice or Injury in so doing; where it should happen to be our Advantage, or at least no Disadvantage to be thus dealt with. For what can make any Difference in this Case? Justice is unquestionably the same in God as in Men; and if Truth be nothing else but Justice, whatever Falsehood is not Injurious, might as well be used by God as by Men. — But,

This has always seemed too harsh, for our Reason to apprehend: And therefore we find that PLATO, though he was weakly of Opinion that earthly Princes might sometimes make use of Falsehood for the Benefit and Good of the Commonwealth, as he fancied; yet he would not affirm the same of God, the supreme Governour of all things; because he thought it would argue some Kind of Infirmity and Imperfection in him, to stand in need of having Recourse to such Means as these. From whence it manifestly appears, that Men are naturally convinced in their Consciences, that Veracity is

Truth distinct from Justice; and that there is a moral Obligation to Truth, immutable, and founded in the Nature of things, distinct from that of not injuring any. — Now this being so; the Case of Difficulty beforementioned, and particularly the latter, will easily be accounted for. — For,

If one Man's not performing his Duty, cannot excuse another from performing his; then are we as certainly bound not to break our Word with an Enemy, as we are obliged to perform several other Acts of Faithfulness and Charity to him.

To which Purpose we have Instances both in sacred and prophane History.

We have a singular Instance of this in JOSHUA, & the Princes of Israel with him, who were observant of their Oath towards the Inhabitants of Gibeon, and spared them, notwithstanding they had fraudulently obtained the Oath and Promise from them: "We have sworn unto them, (said they,) by the Lord God of Israel: now, therefore, we may not touch them." (*) — Again,

When the Roman Empire was in its greatest Splendour and most flourishing Estate; (i. e.) when they were most eminent above other Nations for their Virtue and Honour; they would sooner die, of which there are several Instances given us by TULLY

(*) Joshua ix. 19.

Tully and others,) than break their Faith or Word with an Enemy.

I have mentioned nothing of the Injustice done by PROMISSARY Lyes to those who are so credulous as to entertain Hopes from them, nor of the common Pretences which are made to excuse them; as, That they are necessary to keep up the Dependances of great Men, &c. (*) — For,

(*) *Spem Vultu simulat, premit altum Corde Dolorem.*

Courtiers generally pay Services with smoak and fair Words, and use a World of unprofitable Ceremony to mortify an honest Man: Their Acknowledgements have not so much Respect to the *past*, as Design upon the *future*: They acknowledge Obligations to all that are in any Post to oblidge, and by an affected Gratitude for Favours never done, insinuate themselves into those in whose Power it is to do them.

The Great Ones, in Requital, have a Trick as artificial to excuse themselves from doing Kindness, as the Courtiers have to engage them to it. They reproach Men with Services never done, and complain of Ingratitude, tho they have hardly oblidged any one, to draw from hence a specious Pretence to oblidge no one.

It is a Court Humour, to keep People upon the Tenters; their Injuries are quick and sudden, but their Benefactions are slow. Great Men love to wrack Men with Attendance, and account it an Ostentation of their Power to hold their Suitors in Hand and to have many Witnesses of their Interest.

It is, therefore, not uncommon to see a Man, after grown-old in Attendance, and after having passed Half his Life in Servitude, to call himself the unhappiest of all Men, and pretend to be disappointed because a Courtier broke his Word! He that promises any thing but what may naturally arise from his own Property or Industry, and goes beyond the Desire of possessing above two Parts in three even of that, lays up for himself an increasing Store of Afflictions and Disappointments

[illegible] not [illegible] considering the private Motives upon [illegible]

There are but two Means in the World of gaining by other Men, and those are, by being either *agreeable* or *profitable*. The Generality of Mankind do all things for their own Sakes; and when you hope any thing from Persons above you, if you cannot say, I can be this *agreeable* or this *profitable*, it is ridiculous to pretend to the Dignity of being unfortunate when they leave you; you are injurious alone, in hoping for any other than to be neglected; for such as can make Words the Description of being capable to *please* or *profit* their Patron, when his Humour or Interest calls for their Capacity either Way, are the only Ones regarded by them.

It is making ourselves considerable to have Others expect what may promote their Happiness from our Hands. We are naturally fond of Superiority, and of having others dependant upon us; and this Purpose is better served by *fooling*, than by *gratifying* the Expectations they may have from us: the *soothing* their Hopes, keeps them our Slaves; but *satisfying* them, makes them their own Masters, if not our Enemies. A generous Breast, indeed, feels Pleasure in gratifying the Expectations of others; but it is Pain and Jealousy to the selfish Heart, which is well pleased to see others pine for what they want, but is alarmed to see them gratified.

When we see these Men making magnificent Speeches to the People, full of vain Promises, we naturally suppose our Eyes to be fixed upon a *Dutch Tree*, which has all the Pomp and Beauty imaginable; but alas! it bears no Fruit. If we have need of them, he will deceive us, & smile upon them, and put them in Hope, he will speak them fair, and will say, What wanteth Thou? If thou be for his Profit, he will use thee; but if thou hast nothing, he will forsake thee. But, there cannot be a greater Treachery than *first* to raise a Confidence, and *then* deceive it. Quick Promisers are commonly slow Performers.

When a positive Promise is made, the Nature of it should be fully considered: it gives the Person to whom it is made an absolute Right

upon which Persons, in eminent Stations, may sometimes

to the thing that is promised; and to deny it him utterly, is a palpable Injury; to with-hold it longer than the Time appointed, or to put it off from Time to Time, is an unnatural Cruelty, and a barbarous Abuse of the Expectation which we have raised and encouraged.

Perhaps, his whole Dependance rests upon it, and every Disappointment tortures and afflicts him.

The Heart is a Joint witness with God, & if it retracts or disowns the Engagement, it contradicts the Testimony of Him who will prove and confirm it, by infinite Vengeance.

When we endeavour to recommend ourselves to each other by Professions of Kindness, we should really bear the Kindness we profess: for unless This accompanies them, they are but as "Clouds without Water, and Trees without Fruit." This is their best Estate:

But, if they are made not only without Kindness, but with a wicked Intention to ensnare the Man that believes them, and accomplish his Ruin, which cannot be so effectually brought to pass by open Enmity, they are then "like unto whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead Men's Bones, and of all Uncleanness."

Nothing is more odious than the Practice of those, who with fine Looks and fair Speeches make us hope for Services they never mean to perform. *Vir nullâ Fide.* See No. 224 of the Spectator.

Magna debet esse in Promissore Diligentia, quia inanis Promissor sæpè de Amicis alicui comparat Inimicos; id ergò agas, ut nè quis merito te in Odio habeat. Ut sublatis Columnis, ruit Ædificium: sic, Fide Promissorum irratâ, perit Commercium. Hæc ut largiendum, quàm promittendum promptior esse debes. Donum enim, licèt exiguum, prodest egenti; Verba autem et magnifica Promissa nulli sunt utilia. Priusquàm promittas, delibera; ad cum promiseris, fac ut præstes. Quod ei promisum, sanctissimè observandum est. Propositi tenax. Restituendum est, non Verbis.

"Be not hasty in thy Tongue, and in thy Deeds slack and remiss."

Whoever hath promised, hath made himself a Debtor, (*Qui promisit, debet,*)

times be inclined to act, but what is incumbent upon all good Men, without Diſtinction, at all Times.

It may not be amiſs to obſerve here, that it was great Matter of Joy and Triumph to the primitive Chriſtians, (recorded for our Example,) that with Simplicity and godly Sincerity, and not with fleſhly Wiſdom,

II. To the Reaſons diſſuading from it,

1. Unleſs he be punctual in the Payment, commits an Injuſtice.

Quæ præſtare nolis, cave ne promittas; ſas unum Verba retinere. Non illum Promiſſa: ad hæc enim præſtanda, Fama, Fides, et Veritas, omnes

Cur tam pellicite Pandere Verba, torrent? — Spem longam reſecat

"Hope deferred maketh the Heart ſick," (*Gratia ab Officio, quod libere laudat, abeſt.*) but when the Deſire cometh it is a Tree of Life."

gregium quiddam polliceri videtur, ni ille ſervilior eſt. Ille quidem ſplendidâ et magnificâ Oratione multa pollicentur, nihil tamen horum præſtant quicquam. Ut præſtat abeſſe, quam Amicis in Calamitate non opitulari; ita, præſtat non promittere, quam Pacta non adimplere.

Were the Occaſion readily conſidered, as the Meaſure of Approbation, all Falſehood would be out of Countenance; & an Author in impoſing upon Mankind, would be as contemptible in the State of Life, as another: A Couple of Courtiers making Profeſſions of Eſteem, would make the ſame Figure, after Breach of Promiſe, as two Knights of the Poſt convicted of Perjury. But Converſation is falſe to a low Point of Morality, that he is the Man in Danger, who is moſt apt to believe.

Think e'en you promiſe, but diſdain to trade,
By ſubtle Arts, your Promiſes when made.

It is an unhappy thing, therefore, for Great Men to be ſometimes neceſſitated to promiſe, when they know they cannot, in Prudence, perform.

Wisdom, but by the Grace of God they had their Conversation in the World," and "spake as of Sincerity, as of God, and in the Sight of God;" than which there cannot be a more powerful Consideration to those who believe a God, to make them always speak the real Sense of their Mind.

The Nature of Lying being thus explained, and Pretences for it obviated, we proceed,

II. To the Reasons diſſuading from it,

As to jocular Lyes, with those to whom a Text of Scripture is of any Weight, This may be sufficient to restrain them, that we are commanded to "use no Manner of Lie, for the Fashion thereof is not good." It is not becoming Christians, who acknowledge a God of perfect Truth, to border even upon the Appearance of Falsehood.

So that, whatever Doubts might have been raised or however justifiable they might have been thought before Revelation took place; yet now there can be no reasonable Foundation for them. But,

These Jests very often occasion very serious, and bad Consequences. (*) The

(*) *Ep. ad magn. confrat. Diſcipulos.*

Tho' fictitious lies may not be a direct Breach upon Charity, yet they are upon Truth, and weaken Men's Regard for it; and tho' such Inventions may produce some Mirth and Entertainment for the Company, yet they can give none in the Reflection applied to ourselves; and upon Reflection they only gain us the Reputation of impertinent Liars. Wickedness in Jest is real Impiety. (See Note (*) Page 299.

This Scripture therefore hath passed a very severe Censure upon them. "As a Madman who casteth Fire-brands, Arrows, and Death; so is the Man that deceiveth his Neighbour, and saith, Am I not in Sport?"

Tho undoubtedly those Falsehoods are the worst, which hurt others the most directly, yet Falsehoods in general are hurtful and wrong: and therefore Lying; all Use either of Words or Actions of known settled Import, with Purpose to deceive, is unlawful: and those Offences of this Kind, which may seem the most harmless, have commonly great Evil in them. Besides, Those who allow themselves in these lesser Matters, may easily be betrayed into the grosser Act of Speaking Falsehood on any Occasion: a dangerous Introduction to speaking it on more, if not, on all Occasions. If so trifling a Motive as Self-will prevail on us to violate Truth, how can we be expected to withstand more weighty Temptations? &c. And then,

As to OFFICIOUS Lies, or those told for the Service of Others, we are expressly commanded "not to do Evil," (which Lying certainly is,) "that Good may come." — And,

As to MISCHIEVOUS Lyes, those we mean which are delivered with a real Design to defraud, these are of

a fatal Nature, and strike deep: to wave insisting on the Injury they do our Souls in Respect to our future Existance, they oppose the Perfection of God, in the Case; and are destructive to Society.

To Lie, in any Respect, is directly opposite to the Nature and Being of God, whom to follow and imitate, "as dear Children," is both our Duty and Happiness, who is "a God of Truth," and loves and practises it in all his Doings, and "all false Ways He utterly abhors;" and therefore it is, that we have so many express Commands given us against this Sin.

Under the Law it was enjoined, "Ye shall not deal falsely, nor Lie one to another."

Under the Gospel it is repeated, "Lie not one to another;" "wherefore, putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour."

So that nothing appears more distant from, or contrary to, God, than Falsehood; whom we can neither resemble nor please without a most strict Observance of Truth. — But further,

This inverts the Order and End of Speech, which is freely and fairly to communicate our Minds to each other.

God has created Man a REASONABLE and a SOCIABLE Creature: REASONABLE as he is indued with

that

that excellent Faculty of Thinking; and because, as he has a Power of communicating these Thoughts.

By the Powers of thinking and reasoning, every individual Man in particular, is exalted above the Rank of brute Creatures, is enabled to contemplate his own Nature, and that of his Fellow-creatures; and, through them, the Perfections of his Almighty Creator: But then, by the Power of COMMUNICATING THEIR THOUGHTS, Societies of Men have this peculiar Advantage, that they can further improve, and be assistant to each other; they can acquaint one another with their Wants and Necessities; they can comfort, instruct, exhort, reprove: In a Word, they can so communicate their Counsels, that as every particular Person is concerned for the whole Body, so the Whole is concerned for the Welfare of each Particular. The natural Way of communicating these Thoughts, is by the Use of SPEECH: and as every particular Man, without the Faculty of thinking and reasoning, would be nothing superiour to a Beast; so Societies of Men without the Use of some Way of communicating their Thoughts, could make no Advantage nor Improvement of each other's Reason and Understanding. Now, to make use of This Means to the RECEIVING each

other, which God gave us on Purpose for mutual Inſtruction, is a manifeſt Perverſion of ſo excellent a Gift.

Setting the former Conſideration therefore aſide, (the Evil of a Lie,) let us only ſuppoſe that Men might innocently converſe together, without thinking themſelves concerned to believe a Word they ſay; what ſtrange Confuſion and Diſorder muſt hence enſue! (*)

Truth is the Band of Union, and the Baſis of human Happineſs; without this Virtue, there is no Reliance upon Language, no Confidence in Friendſhip, no Security in Promiſes and Oaths. If there was nothing but Ambiguity in Words; if they were made uſe of only to conceal Fraud, to evade Juſtice, and to over-reach the unwary; what Fears and Jealouſies, what Diſtance and Diſregard, what Diſtruſt and Averſion, muſt ſuch Practice produce? — No one can cloſe with a Lyar; there is Danger in the Correſpondence; and more than that, we naturally hate thoſe who make it their Buſineſs to deceive us. In

(*) —— —— *Cinerique ſubdit Ignes*
Suppoſitos Cineri doloſo.
You tread on Fire beneath the Aſhes hid.
Inimicus quidem mihi ille eſt, æque ac Portæ Inferorum, qui aliud occultat Animo, aliud vero loquitur.

In Word, a Lye is a publick Nuisance, by diſhonouring Belief, makes Reality ſuſpected, and one honeſt Man a Stranger to another. — And yet,

This is what every inſincere Man, but eſpecially the Liar, contributes what he can to involve the World in. (*) "Lie not one to another, (ſaith St. Paul,) for we are Members one of another." Members of the ſame POLITICAL Body, as we are Men; and by a ſtricter Tie, Members of the ſame MYSTICAL Body, as we are Chriſtians; "Wherefore as there is one Hope of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm, one God and Father of us all, ſo ought there to be one Mind and one Heart, with Simplicity and Sincerity, that ſpeaking the Truth in Love, we may grow up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Chriſt."

Truth is of ſo ſacred a Nature, as not to be proſtituted or trifled with on any Account, it being the Cement and Safeguard of all Society; and is, therefore, what ought to be inviolably obſerved in all our Converſations and Dealings with one another; that

(*) Every Lying deſtroys the End of Speech, and leads us into perpetual Miſtakes, by the very Means which God intended ſhould lead us into Truth. It puts an End to all the Pleaſure, all the Benefit, and Safety of Converſation. At this Rate, no One knows on What, or Whom to depend; no Juſtice can be done, nor Wickedneſs be prevented or punished, nor Buſineſs executed. See No. 236 of the Spectator.

that the Tongue, which was given for the Glory of God, and our mutual Good, may not become the Instrument of Deceit and Dishonour to both.

If you consider the Persons with whom you deal treacherously, you must necessarily be sensible of the Vileness of your Proceeding and look upon the odious Practice with Loathing and Abhorrence.

If they are honest and sincere, as probably they are: for they are the Persons that are most easily wrought upon, the least suspicious of your Baseness, and therefore the most exposed to it; think with yourselves, how unnatural it is, to make a Prey of such ingenuous Temper, and privately injure them, while they innocently breath forth their Thoughts, and "pour out their Hearts before you."

Their Sincerity bespeaks your tenderest Regard, and you offer Violence to yourselves, and put off your Humanity, when you betray them. They, alas, entertain a kind Opinion of you, and persuade themselves, they may safely put their Confidence in you. And you, (if you are false to them,) wound them to the Heart, while they are leaning upon your Breasts, and fondly knitting their Soul with yours. If you can proceed to such Villany as this, you may also murder the Guest, that begs Protection for a Night under your Roof, or you may im-

brue

bury your Hands in the Blood of the harmless Inhabitant in the midst of its peaceful Sleep.

Dreadful was that State of War which impious Men have falsely supposed to be the State of Nature: yet it were better for us to live in that dreadful State, always apprehensive of open Violence, than to be always liable to be surprized by secret Treachery.

Supposing that the Persons you are dealing with, are themselves insincere, and you flatter yourselves that you are only acting the defensive Part, and fighting with their own Weapons; even then you are self-condemned. You are provoked by their Treachery, and are you therefore treacherous? You justly abhor their Practice, and yet imitate the Practice you abhor.

The Consequences of Falsehood are most pernicious in the important Affairs of Life, and it has also a baleful Influence upon our common Conversation. It entirely destroys the Cheerfulness of it, and strikes an uncomfortable Damp upon it: there can be no Pleasure in conversing together, if we are always afraid of being betrayed.

Add to this, the Heinousness of this Sin before God. — Tho' we do not call upon our Maker to be Witness of our Perfidy, yet He is a Witness of

whatever we ſay; and it is preſumptuous Wickedneſs to utter an Untruth in the Preſence of the God of Truth. — Again,

There is no Sin can be a ſurer Sign of an unrenewed and unſanctified State, than Lying; and therefore, in Scripture, this Mark is put upon it, "the Wicked go aſtray, ſpeaking Lies."

Whatever groſs and notorious Sins Men may abſtain from, or whatever fair Pretences they may make of Religion and Goodneſs, "ſpeaking Lyes," is, of itſelf, a ſufficient Proof that they are of the Number of the Wicked, and not the true Children of God.

That we are of This moſt comfortable and honourable Relation is, in a peculiar Manner, known by abſtaining from this abominable Sin: "Surely (ſaith God by his Prophet,) they are my People, Children that will not Lye." — And Solomon to the ſame Purpoſe: "A righteous Man hateth Lying" (*) — And David alſo giving a brief Account of his religious and pious Converſation, (†) declares that he would not ſo much as ſuffer a Servant, that was uſed to tell Lies, to continue in his Houſe. "He

(*) Truth is only agreeable to the Virtuous, and it is no ſmall Reflexion on Princes and Great Men, that ſo few of them can bear to hear it.

(†) In the 101ſt. Pſalm.

"He that walketh in a perfect Way, he shall serve me; but he that worketh Deceit, shall not dwell within my House; he that telleth Lies shall not tarry in my Sight." — Again,

As Truth entitles us to God, and to the Regard of all good Men; so Lying evinces Men to be the Children of the Devil, to whom all that practise Falsehood necessarily belong. The Character of the Devil is, that "he abode not in the Truth, and there is no Truth in him; When he speaketh a Lie, it is of his own; for, he is a Lyar, and the Father of Lies." — "He was a Lyar from the Begining;" and they that follow him therein, are said, to be in Covenant with Hell. (*)

What is it but false Suggestions, wrong Reasoning, and deceitful Colours, which give Force to the Temptations of Satan, and bring Mankind within the Power of the Devil: those, therefore, who make use of Falsehood, and manage by the same Measures, must be reckoned in his Interest: by playing these Qualities upon their Neighbours, they imitate his Temper, applaud his Conduct, and advance his Kingdom.

So that This Sin is truly DIABOLICAL: St. Peter therefore spoke with great Propriety when he said to

(*) Isaiah xxviii. 15.

to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to Lye?" as if perceiving his Contrivance in the very Performance. — And Oh!

That Men would ſeriouſly conſider This, that when they frame a Lye to the Hurt of their Chriſtian Brethren, they are doing the Work of "the great Accuſer of mankind;" or, thereby to overreach and defraud, are then complying with the Suggeſtions of the "Wicked-One, who ſtill works in the Children of Diſobedience;" and are doing THAT which renders them the Children of the Devil.

How careful, then, (to ſpeak with all Sincerity,) ought we to be, to avoid thoſe things which ſubject us to ſo vile a Relation! — But further,

It is a Sin that God ſeldom fails to detect, confound, and puniſh. — Indeed,

Not only God, but even Men alſo, (eſpecially thoſe who have been in any Way hurt by it,) will think themſelves ſufficiently authorized to vindicate themſelves by convincing all Gainſayers of the Truth, and to retaliate the Provocation, either by finding or making Faults, whereby to blacken them in Return; not only their Care being engaged, their Induſtry quickened, and their Invention whetted hereby to obſerve or deviſe Matter of Recrimination; but alſo their Judgment bribed to think it not only

lawful,

lawful, but even needful in their own Defence to disparage the Liar, that his Report may have the less Weight to their Prejudice. (*)

Thus is this Sin of pernicious Conſequence to the Sinner himſelf, even in the natural Tendency of things.

There is not a more contemptible, or more hateful Character than that of a known LIAR: nor is this a local or temporal Notion, not any partial Opinion, peculiar to ourſelves, but is what hath been ſtigmatized by the ſober Part of the World in all Ages and Places, and under every Diſpenſation. The wiſe Son of SIRACH declares that "a Lie is a foul Blot in a Man," and that "a Thief is better than a Man that is accuſtomed to Lie;" but withal declares, "they Both ſhall have Deſtruction to Heritage."

The Pſalmiſt expreſſeth his Abhorrence of the Practice in very ſtrong Terms, "Let Lying Lips be put to Silence;" & makes his Prayer to the Searcher of Hearts to be preſerved from ſuch Perſons, "deliver my Soul, O Lord, from Lying Lips, and a deceitful Tongue." The wiſe Agur deprecates this Evil very emphatically, "Remove far from me Vanity and Lyes." — And The

(*) See the firſt Part of No. 485. of the Spectator.

The Reason of the universal Detestation of this Vice, is as plain as the Fact. For, who is secure against the Mischief of a lying Tongue? our Life, our Property, our Reputation, the Security of every thing that is valuable to us, depend on Men's bearing a just Regard to Truth. No Piety, Integrity or Prudence can guard against the Misrepresentations of a Lyar; and therefore all who are influenced with the Love of Truth and good Principles, have naturally and necessarily a Detestation of that Practice, which so immediately contradicts their End, and defeats their just Recompence.

Add to this, the consequent Danger of it. The Charge of it only, is such, as Men of Honour will resent at the Expence of their Lives. (*) — But,

This is not all, God himself, (as we have observed,) will be an express Avenger of it. — He hath such a peculiar Care over Innocence as scarce-

(*) *Improbi Hominis est, Mendacio fallere.*

Even the pretended Advocates for Honour, declare the Baseness of Lying and Falsehood. For to give a Man the Lie, is in their Esteem an unpardonable Affront; a Reflexion that can be washed out by nothing but Blood; an Affront that cannot be expiated by any thing, but the Sacrifice and Death of the Offender. — And,

If the groundless Imputation of Lying is so foul a Blot, how great is the Weight of Guilt and Infamy that falls upon them who deserve the Charge! and if they cannot bear to be accused of it without Reason, should they not be afraid to give Reason for the Accusation?

ly ever to abandon it, so as finally to suffer by any Falsehood. (*)

"The good Man's Righteousness, (the Psalmist observes,) God will bring forth as the Light, and his Judgment as the Noon-day." The Lips of Truth shall be established forever.

Whereas, the Detractor's Memory He suffers either to fail; or their Reports to interfere, as thereby even to confound themselves. (†)

"Lying Lips are but for a Moment."

It is difficult to manage: The Path of Truth is plain and safe, is simple and unvaried (‡) is always consistent with itself, and needs nothing to help it out; it is always near at Hand, and sits upon our Lips, and is ready to drop out before we are aware: (§) whereas that of Falsehood is a perplexing

(*) Truth is the Child of Time; e'er long she will appear to vindicate our Cause.

Quicquid sub Terra est, in Apricum proferet Ætas,
Defodiet condetque nitentia.
Cura pii Dis sunt; et qui colùere, coluntur.

Innocency needs not fear.

(‡) *Mendacem memorem esse oportet.*

(†) *Non unum Hodie, Cras aliud; sed semper idem.*

(§) Truth is a good Cause, and needs no Help of Oratory; and the least Speech discovers the best Credit. Truth and Falsehood, (like

ing Maze, and sets our Invention on the Rack; and one Falsehood needs a great many more of the same Kind to help it out.

After the first Departure from Sincerity, it is not in the Power of the Lyar to stop: one Artifice unavoidably leads on to another, (*) till, as the Intricacy of the Labrinth increases, he is left entangled in his own Snare; "insomuch, that whoso seeth him, shall laugh him to Scorn." It is like building upon a false Foundation, which continually stands in need of Props to keep it up, and proves at last more chargeable than to have raised a substantial Building at first upon a true and solid Foundation: for Sincerity is firm and substantial, having nothing hollow or unsound in it; and because it is plain and open, it fears no Discovery; of which the crafty Man is always in Danger; and when he thinks he walks in the Dark, all his Pretences are so transparent, that "he that runs may read them:" He is the last Man that finds himself to be found out; and whilst he takes it for granted, that he makes Fools

Iron and Clay in the Image of Nebuchadnezer,) may cleave, but they will not incorporate. Truth is born with us, and we must do Violence to Nature, to shake it off. — *Non est mentiri meum.*

Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapientia dixit.

Good Sense and Nature always speak the same.

(*) *Fallacia alia aliam trahit.* — *Aliud ex alio Malum.*

Fools of others, he renders himself ridiculous. (*) Learn to beware, then, of the least Beginning of a Practice that will be sure to end ill. But further, Lying is usually a leading Mischief, it is a fertile Principle, & contains the Seeds of various Productions. It is the Prologue to an unhappy Catastrophy, and oftentimes the first ill Quality a Sinner begins with. It is seldom a solitary Vice, or a barren Misfortune. How often do we see People advance from Lying to Stealing, & from Theft to Murder? nor need we much wonder at the Progress of Wickedness under such Encouragement. He that makes no Scruple of a Lie, is mightily in Danger of further Enormities: they presume strangely upon the Advantage of Concealment, and thus guarded, (as they think) they take their Liberty, and move as they please.

Deceit, then, discovers a little Mind, which stops at temporary Expedients, without rising to comprehensive Views of Conduct; it betrays a dastardly Spirit, and is the Resource of One who wants Courage to avow his Designs, (‡) and therefore, altogether

(*) *Ut Mugiles, si Caput condiderint, putant se totos occultari; Ità, quidem, si sua Vitia dissimularint ipsi, stultè putant ab aliis non animadverti.*

(‡) *Aristotle* lays it down for a Maxim, that "A brave Man is plain in his Discourse, and keeps close to Truth." And *Plutarch* calls Lying, "The Vice of Slaves."

gether unbecoming a Person of Honesty & Honour, Youth should particularly guard against this Vice. (*) That Darkness of Character, where we can see no Heart; those Foldings of Art, through which no native Affection is allowed to penetrate, present an Object unamiable in every Season of Life, but particularly odious in Youth. If at an Age, when the Heart is warm, when the Emotions are strong, and when Nature is expected to shew itself free and open, they can already smile and deceive, what are we not to look for when they shall be longer backneyed in the Ways of Men; when Interest shall have compleated the Obduration of their Hearts, and Experience shall have improved them in all the Arts of Guile!

Dissimulation in Youth is the Forerunner of Perfidy in Age; its first Appearance is the fatal Omen of growing Depravity and future Shame. It obscures the Lustre of every Accomplishment, and sinks Men into Contempt both with God and Man.

For, — Being once known to be addicted hereto, Men will not believe them, even when they speak the Truth; (‡) and then they will be fit neither for

(*) *Fuge illos qui Elephantem deglutiunt.*

(‡) A Lyar begins with making Falsehood appear like Truth, and

for Counsel, nor Friendship, neither for Service, nor Command; neither for Office, nor Honour; but, like Salt that hath lost its Savour, will be fit only for the Dunghill, to be cast out, and trodden under-foot of Men, and perish forever."

Lying is a very hazardous Undertaking, there is Danger in almost every Step, and the Ground is as hollow as the Man. How many Ways are there to draw the Curtain, and discover the Impostor? Surprize and Slips of Memory, Ignorance of the Subject, Starts of Passion, or unexpected Company; any Emergency, any unfortunate Turn of this Kind, is enough to unmask the Lyar, and drag the Imposture to Light. — Indeed,

God oftentimes makes it, as it is the Occasion of much Evil to others, to be also of great Calamity to the Person guilty of it; all Kinds of Lyars commonly living to be convinced of their Folly by their Sorrow,

and often with making Truth itself appear like Falsehood.

When a Man hath forfeited the Reputation of his Integrity, he is set fast; and nothing will serve him, either Truth or Falsehood. — *Res ad Rejtim redit. Mendaci, ne quidem Verum dicenti, creditur. Omnia perdidit, qui Fidem perdidit. Ut Vita, semèl extincta, nunquam revocatur; ità, Fides, semel emissa, nunquam revertitur.*

No Vehemence of Air, no Solemnity of Promise, no Strength of Aggravation, will procure him any Belief, but only render him suspected of the deeper Hypocrisy. —

Sorrow, being ever in Fear (*) before Diſcovery, and always in Diſgrace and Grief after it, according to that true Obſervation of Solomon; "A falſe Witneſs ſhall not be unpuniſhed; and he that ſpeaketh Lyes ſhall ſurely ſmart for it." (‡)

Whatever Convenience may be thought to be in Falſehood and Diſſimulation, it is ſoon over; but the Inconvenience of it is perpetual; becauſe it brings a Man under an unconquerable Jealouſy and Suſpicion; ſo that he is not believed when he ſpeaks the Truth, nor truſted when perhaps he means Honeſty. — Many other Faults may be born with, ſo long as Honeſty and Sincerity laſt: but a Failure in theſe cannot be paſſed over. (†) — But,

However ſuch may eſcape with Impunity at preſent

[*] *Præcipitium Timorem facit.* — Fear attends the Guilty. *Frondium Crepitus Leporem terret.*

Wickedneſs, condemned by her own Witneſs, is very timorous; & being preſſed with Conſcience, always forecaſteth evil things: for Fear is nothing elſe but a betraying the Succors, which Reaſon offers.

The only Remedy againſt Fear is the Reſult of virtuous Actions; for thoſe who do no Evil, fear none. It is Virtue only that repels Fear, and Fear only that makes Life troubleſome. — *Mali ſemper ſunt pavidi & meticuloſi: vis igitur nunquam eſſe triſtis, bene vive.*

(‡) *Calumniatorem ſua Pœna manet.*

(†) *Ut ſubmerſâ Navi, totum Onus incluſum perit. Ut ſublato Fundamento, ruit Ædificium; Ita, perdità Fide, ruit Commercium.*

Horret quisque adire Locum ubi læſus eſt — Ictus Piſcator ſapit.

ſent, yet God will aſſuredly chaſtiſe them for it hereafter.

As immutable Truth is one of the divine Perfections, and nothing can be the Object of the divine Favour, that is not an Imitation of his MORAL Attributes, we may undoubtedly conclude, that "a God that cannot Lie," cannot but deteſt Lying in his Creatures, and will not fail to puniſh ſuch Abuſe of his gracious Gifts both of Reaſon and Speech; and therefore can never be ſuppoſed to take to himſelf any who are addicted to that pernicious Falſehood, which He abominates. — But,

God hath not left us to infer this by argumentative Deductions only from his Attributes and our Faculties, and the Sin and Ingratitude of affronting the One, and abuſing the Other; but, in a ſhorter & plainer Method, in his revealed Will, hath expreſsly publiſhed his Diſpleaſure againſt it: and this, not only in Precepts preſcribing a ſtrict Adherence to Truth, and prohibiting all Deviation from it; but in poſitive Denunciations of Wrath and Vengeance againſt it.

"These six Things, (ſays Solomon,) doth the Lord hate, yea SEVEN are an Abomination to him; a proud Look, a Lying Tongue, and Hands that ſhed innocent Blood, an Heart that deviſeth wicked

ked Imaginations, Feet that are swift in running to Mischief, a false Witness that speaketh Lies, and him that soweth Discord among Brethren."

Nor will the divine Displeasure be vain, or only speculative; but will be followed by suitable Punishment: "a false Witness shall not be unpunished, & he that speaketh Lies, shall not escape:" or, (as it is elsewhere expressed,) "shall surely smart for it."

"Thus saith the Lord, Judgment will I lay to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummet, and the Hail shall sweep away the Refuge of Lies, and the Waters shall overflow the hiding Place; and your Covenant with Death shall be disannulled, and your Agreement with Hell shall not stand; when the overflowing Scourge shall pass through, then shall ye be trodden down by it." Again, in Jeremiah:

"They will deceive every One his Neighbour, and will not speak the Truth; they have taught their Tongue to speak Lies, & weary themselves to commit Iniquity; their Tongue is an Arrow shot out, it speaketh Deceit; One speaketh peaceably to his Neighbour with his Mouth, but in Heart he layeth his Wait: Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, & shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?" — But,

The Declarations of the Gospel are still more express and severe not only in the general Threatning against all Sin, (in which this, of Course, is included,) but, in specifying this Iniquity, in particular, as liable to the severest Vengeance.

St. Paul ranks Offenders of this Kind in the worst Company; "The Law, (says he,) is not made for a righteous Man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and Sinners, for unholy and prophane, for Murderers of Fathers and Murderers of Mothers, for Men-Slayers, for Whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with Mankind, for Men-Stealers, for LYARS, for perjured Persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound Doctrine."

In the Revlation we have it equally express, "The Fearful, and Unbelieving, and the Abominable, & Murderers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all LYARS, shall have their Part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone; which is the second Death." After which, giving a large Description of the heavenly Jerusalem, he adds, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie." And again, "Without, are Dogs, and Sorcerers, and Whore-

mongers, and Murderers, and Idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lie."

So that the worst of Punishment with the vilest of Sins will be the Reward of the Sin before us in the next Life, however it may escape in this.

"Knowing, therefore, the Terror of the Lord, we persuade Men." Knowing the dreadful Vengeance which will attend on this Iniquity, we intreat them to decline the Practice of it. For, the Rise, we see, as well as the Progress and Conclusion of it is all Terror. — From Hell all Falsehood originally came, and thither will it finally lead, and all its intermediate Steps are in the Paths of Perplexity, Shame, and Ruin. Its Beginning, its present Recompence, and future Prospect, are each respectfully hateful and terrifying, and concur mightily to dissuade from it.

To Conclude. The best Way to preserve us from Lying, is to keep our private Life unexceptionable, to discharge the Business of our Station, and so be in a Condition to answer a fair Question without straining Truth. Innocence is without Art, and those that are true in Life, are true in Language. A Man thoroughly honest, has seldom any Occasion for Lying. If we do but keep up to the Measures

ſures of Honour, and the Limits of Modeſty; if we curb our Vanity, and diminiſh our Pride, our Truth and Sincerity will then be preſerved at an eaſy Rate, and neither our Characters lie at Stake, nor our Names be recorded in the Regiſter of Contempt.

"Lie not One to another, then, ſeeing ye have put off the Old-Man with his Deeds." Yea, "Putting away Lying, ſpeak the Truth every Man with his Neighbour." (*)

SERMON CXX.

On Truth,
the Oppofite of Lying.

Ephe. iv. 25. "— Speak every Man Truth with "his Neighbour." (*)

Speech is a Prerogative peculiar to Man, (*) and given for the Benefit and Comfort of a Creature formed for Society. (‡)

(*) *Et canat argutè Lingua diferta Sono.*
Balare Oves folent, non Homines. — Quemadmodùm loqui Hominis eſt Proprium, ità mugire Boûm. — Balbutire licet, donèc loqui poſſumus.

(‡) *Eloquentiâ a brutis Animalibus ſeparamur: illis Robore et Celeritate inferiores ſumus, aliisquè Commoditatibus permultis: verùm Vis quædam nobis inſita eſt invicèm perſuadendi, explicandique quæcunque viſum fuerit, quâ multò ſumus iis ſuperiores.*

The Faculty of Speech, which makes ſo conſiderable a Difference between a Man and a Brute, is of excellent Uſe, as it renders Mankind converſible one with another, and as the various Endowments, Obſervations, Experiences, and Attainments of every individual Man, are hereby, with a greater Facility, mutually communicated. See Page 377 And we may add to this, the Invention of Letters, by Means of which we are not confined within the narrow Limits of our Acquaintance &

Contempo-

By this we transmit to others, with great Ease, Freedom, & Exactneſs, the Thoughts of our Hearts, and become capable of diffuſing the Riches of that Knowledge, (as it were,) in a Moment, the gathering of which may have coſt us the Pains and Study, perhaps, of many Years. — And,

To ſuch Purpoſes, no Doubt, it was, that the Giver of this Faculty deſigned it ſhould be employed.

Hence it is that we are ſo frequently commanded in Scripture to the due Uſe and right Exerciſe of it; and not to abuſe, in the Ways of Deceit and Irreligion, what was given & deſigned us to be employed in the Uſe of edifying, in Sincerity and Truth. (*)

The Apoſtle, in the three firſt Chapters of this Epiſtle, ſpeaks of our Election, Adoption, and many other

Cotemporaries; but one Man may be acquainted with the Attainments of Multitudes of the wiſeſt Men, in preſent and ancient Times, either in his own, or remote Countries.

Sic ſerat, ac referat tacitas nunc Litera Voces,
Et peragit Linguæ Charta Manuſque vices.

See Strada's Account of a chimerical Correſpondence between two Friends, in No. 241 of the Spectator.

(*) *Verba propterea inſtituta ſunt, non ut per ea ſe invicem Homines fallant; ſed ut eis quiſque in alterius Notitiam Cogitationes ſuas proferat.*

"Thou Man alone canſt ſpeak — Wonder at thy glorious Prerogative, and pay to Him who gave it thee a rational and welcome Praiſe, teaching thy Children Wiſdom, inſtructing the Offspring of thy Loins in Piety."

Serm. CXX.

other Matters of Faith. — But, as in those Days, as often as Men heard of Faith they apprehended it to be an Assent of the Mind to some Truth, separate from Obedience and a good Life, the Apostle therefore takes particular Care to put them in Mind, that their Faith ought to be PRACTICAL, and adorned with all Manner of Virtue.

To this End, in the Chapter before us, he begins with an Exhortation to an holy Life, "worthy of that Vocation wherewith we are called." — And,

Having all along exhorted to several Virtues, and dissuaded from as several particular Sins, in the Verse before us, he enforceth a Doctrine, a Virtue but of too little Observation amongst us, from a Consideration of the Malignity of its opposite Vice: "Wherefore, (says he,) putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another;" (i.e.) not only Partakers of the same Nature, but Professors of the same Religion; and Members of the same Christian, as well as Civil Society.

In speaking further to these Words, I shall,

First, explain the Duty before us. — And then,

II. The Extent of it in itself; with the Persons practising it, and the Persons to whom it is to be practised.

III.

III. The several Reasons engaging to it.

Concluding with some general Rules, to promote the Practice of it.

As to the Import of Truth; It may be briefly defined in this, [viz] that it is a Virtue through which we are inclined to speak no otherwise with our Tongue than we think in our Heart; it is of a large and comprehensive Nature, and denotes all that Plainness and Integrity, all that Simplicity and Honesty, which ought to be practised by all good Christians, upon all Occasions.

The Gospel-law doth not only command us to the observance of Truth in the more open and known Actions of Men, where falsehood must ever be detected in the first Onset, but also in the more secret and hidden Causes of things, and such as God only and ourselves do really know.

Whatever the common Practice of the World in this Case may be, yet, the Christian-Law allows no liberty for Falsehood in the least Matter, but strictly requires "Truth in the inward Parts," (i.e) in the most hidden & reserved things of Men, "Thou shalt by no Means with a Lye, in any Matter, circumvent thy Brother; but that which is another right, shalt thou speak: I am the Lord." — But further,

Sincerity doth not only consist in speaking the Truth without Artifice or Disguise, but also in the being faithful to the outward Professions of Kindness and Respect which we make to other Men, and in satisfying them that our Words speak the real Language of our Hearts; "as of Sincerity, as of God, and in the Sight of God;" than which there cannot be a more powerful Consideration to those who believe a God, to make them always speak the real Sense of their Minds.

A Man of Candor, by any outward Signification of what he intends in Favour of another, will no more mislead him into a false Expectation, (*) than a Man of Veracity will impose upon any Person by a downright Falsehood.

The Definition of Truth, thus given, may be of good Use in general Conversation, whereby to excite Men to all possible Probity, Integrity, Candor, and Plain-dealing; that Commerce may flourish in our Land, by engaging Men to rely upon and trust to the Sincerity, Uprightness, and Honesty of one another. — But,

II. Of the Extent of this Duty in itself, with the Persons practising, and the Persons to whom it is to be practised.

The Subject-Matter is TRUTH, of which ALL Men

(*) See Note (*) Page 370, &c.

Men are to be observed: And that towards ALL Men. – "Speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour."

"Speaking every one Truth with his Neighbour," has ever been acknowleged, by Men of all Conditions, to be our necessary and indispensible Duty. Heathens, as well as Christians, Men of all Ranks and Professions, of all Sects and Religions whatever, have agreed in this, that there is an eternal Obligation founded in the Nature of things, which every Man that attends to the Dictates of his Reason and Conscience cannot but own and be sensible of, that our Words should be agreeable to our Thoughts; and have been sensible that Lying, or endeavouring to deceive each other, is a base and mean Practice, unworthy the Dignity of a rational Creature, and highly displeasing to God, who has given us the Use of that noble Faculty of Speech to this very End, that it might be the Interpreter of our Thoughts to each other.

The Precepts of Scripture are very express to this Purpose; they require Sincerity and Truth, without any impure or foreign Mixture whatever; they require that "we should be sincere, and without Offence;" and that, "putting away Lying,"

we ſhould, (as in the Text,) "ſpeak the Truth every Man with his Neighbour."

Not that it is hereby intended, or that will follow from hence, that a Man is obliged to be ſo very open and communicative, as to let ALL Perſons, without Reſerve, into all his Deſigns; (*) eſpecially

(*) —— *Egregii Mortalem, atque Silenti.*

There is a Time when *Nothing*, a Time when *Something*, but no Time when *all* things are to be ſpoken. Reſervedneſs is the Source, and Slowneſs of Belief the Sinew of Prudence. It is Wiſdom ſometimes to ſeem a Fool, at leaſt ignorant, by that Means to lie out of the Reach of Obſervation and Jealouſy.

Secrecy and Celerity are the two Poles upon which all great Actions move; the nobleſt Deſigns are like a Mine, which having no Vent, is wholly fruſtrate and of no Effect. Diſcover not therefore, to your Enemy either your Wants or your Fears, for thereby you ſtrengthen his Hands, and weaken your own: his Deſigns which before were attended with many Difficulties, are by this Imprudence made eaſy to effect: Families, Cities, and States have been ruined by the fooliſh and inconſiderate Babblings of thoſe, who had not the Power of Silence and Secreſy. Such does injure their Friends, advantage their Enemies, and undo themſelves. Witneſs, Sampſon, whoſe Head, if it had contained the Tithe of the Strength, that is ſaid to have reſided in his Heart, a Miſtreſs had never underſtood where it lay.

Quærit Aquas in Aquis, et Poma fugacia captat:
Tantalus; hoc illi garrula Lingua dedit.

Tantalus in mediâ garrulus erat Aquâ.

"A Fool uttereth all his Mind; but a wiſe Man keepeth it in till afterwards, and many ſhall declare his Wiſdom." Many have repented of *talking*; Few of being *ſilent*.

Nulli tacuiſſe nocet, nocet eſſe locutum.

Locutus

especially where they are particularly and curiously inquisitive, perhaps, on Purpose to deceive. (*) The

Locutum fuisse pœnitet aliquando, fluisse nunquam.
Tutum Silentii Promptum.
Tu igitur, si sapis, id quod scis, tegas.

A Man without Secrecy, is an open Letter for every One to read. *Quale narrat, sibi retinet. — Ita vive, ut nihil tibi committas, nisi quod committendum etiam ante Inimico possis.* See No. 4. of the Spectator.

(*) *Vis Friendum, et sis Negotior.*
Percontatorem fugito, nam Garrulus idem est.

Those who are most particularly inquisitive, are generally most apt to divulge. *Nec retinent patulæ commissa fideliter Aures:*
Sic semel emissum volat irrevocabile Verbum.
Sæpè rogas aliquid, sæpè repulsus eas.

In discharging the Duty of Sincerity it is not necessary to speak the *whole* Truth in every Place, and lay open the entire State of our Mind to every One that desires to look into it. We ought to keep a Guard upon it, and communicate no more of it than is consistent with Prudence and Safety. It is sufficient to open the first Room in our Hearts, to those with whom we are but imperfectly acquainted and to let them in further by Degrees, as our Intimacy & Friendship are gradually improved. When an insinuating Spy is observing our Conduct with an evil Curiosity, we should take care to disappoint his traiterous Intentions, and not rashly disclose our Thoughts, as "*Hezekiah* showed the House of his precious things, the Silver, the Gold, and the Spices, and the precious Ointment, and all the House of his Armour, and all that was found in his Treasures; to the Servants of the King of *Babylon*." The safest and the justest Way of acting, in such a Case, is to impart nothing but Truth, and to conceal nothing with an insincere and base Reserve. (See No. 118. of the Spectator.) The Case is very different when we are under Engagements of speaking the *whole Truth*. Where we must not keep back any Part of it, nor cover it with any Disguise; nor blend it with any Corruption; that Justice may be administered righteously. Serm. CXX.

The wiſeſt of Men would appear to act in many Caſes very weakly, were they to form their Conduct by ſuch a Rule. — And indeed,

It would be great Reproach upon Chriſtianity, to ſuppoſe the Maxims of it inconſiſtent with common Prudence. Our bleſſed Saviour, by qualifying the Simplicity of the Dove with the Wiſdom of the Serpent, hath plainly inſtructed us, that Candor is not only very reconcileable with Caution, but ought never to be ſeparated from it.

A Man, then, is not obliged to ſpeak all Truths that may do Hurt; extraordinary Caſes, in particular Inſtances, fully juſtifying an obſtinate Silence, although at no Time, through Favour or Advantage, to ſcreen with a Lye. "In no way ſpeak againſt the Truth." — But further,

"Speak EVERY Man Truth."

Though Truth is a Virtue, ſo expreſsly enjoined in Scripture, and, in a peculiar Manner, agreeable to the Nature and Genius of our holy Religion, yet (and ſorry I am to ſay it,) it is a Duty far from being ſo generally practiſed as might be expected in Chriſtian Converſation and Dealings among Men.

There are ſome, who, from their Occupation and Manner of Life, pretend that Truth is not abſolutely required in their Calling; and that a ſtrict Adherence

Attachment to it would raise them beyond the Means and Measures of a profitable Livelihood; but, Such Excuses will not only add Shame, but Iniquity to their Practice. (*) — For,

If a strict Adherence to Truth be the Honour and Glory of a Man, Falsity must be his greatest Debasement, and consequently argued that such Professions and Practices are rather to be avoided than continued in.

The Apostle is exceedingly strict in this Case: "Let no Man, (says he,) go beyond or defraud his Brother in ANY Matter; for, the Lord is the Avenger of all such;" and in the Text, "Speak EVERY Man Truth with his Neighbour." — Indeed,

As to PRIME Points, and the social Virtues, Men are generally aware, and treat them as respectable and sacred: for, he who would openly attempt to supersede Justice, Truth, and Honesty, would be avoided by every One. To those who had any Remains of Principle he would be odious: — To those who attended only to their Interest, he would appear dangerous: — But, there are certain Forms and Degrees of these, which have not been exempted from the Scorn of the Unthinking. That

(*) *Non Ego Naturæ, nec fuit tam validis usus.*
Emori præstat per Virtutem, quàm per Dedecus vivere.

See Page 357, &c. And also Knox's Essays; No. 112. Hints to those who are designed for the Profession of the Law. Serm. CXX.

That extensive Generosity, and high Publick Spirit, which prompt a Man to sacrifice his own Interest, in Order to promote some great general Good; and that strict and scrupulous Integrity, which will not allow him, on any Occasion, to depart from the Truth, have often been treated with Contempt by those, who are called Men of the World. They who will not stoop to flatter the Great; - who disdain to comply with prevailing Manners, when they judge them to be evil; - who refuse to take the smallest Advantage of others, in Order to procure the greatest Benefit for themselves, are represented as Persons of romantick Character, and visionary Notions, unacquainted with the World, and unfit to live in it. — Whereas,

Such Persons are so far from being liable to any just Ridicule, that they are intitled to a Degree of Respect, which approaches to Veneration. For, they are, in Truth, the great Supporters and Guardians of publick Order. The Authority of their Character, overawes the giddy Multitude: The Weight of their Example retards the Progress of Corruption; checks that Relaxation of Morals, which is always too apt to gain Ground insensibly, and to make Encroachments on every Department of Society. — Accordingly,

It is this high Generosity of Spirit, this inflexible Virtue, this Regard to Principle, superior to all interested Views, whether of publick Praise, or private Advantage, which hath ever marked the Character of those who have eminently distinguished themselves in PUBLICK Life; who have patronised the Cause of Justice against powerful Oppressors; who, in critical Times, have supported the falling Rights and Liberties of Men, and have reflected Honour on their Nation and Country. Such Persons may have been scoffed at by some among whom they lived; but Posterity has done them ample Justice; and they are the Persons, whose Names are recorded to future Ages, and who are thought & spoken of with Admiration.

The MERE Temporizer, the Man of accommodating Principles, and inferior Virtue, may support a plausible Character for a while among his Friends and Followers; but, as soon as the Hollowness of his Principles is detected, he sinks into Contempt. (*)

They who are prone to deride Men of inflexible Integrity, only betray the Littleness of their own Minds. They shew that they understand not the Sublime of Virtue, that they have no Discernment of the true Excellence of Man. By affecting to throw any Discouragement on Purity and Strictness

(*) *Invidiam placere paras Virtute relicta.*

It is impossible to be sincere, and especially to support the Christian Character, if we always assent and comply with our Connections, and the Company we happen to be in; indeed in the present corrupt State of human Nature, it is the worst thing we can do; it is not only a Vice, but the Parent of many Vices. Temporizing overthrows all Steadiness of Principle, and produces that sinful Conformity to the World, which taints the whole Character.

As to those who are Time-servers, and Men-pleasers from lucrative Views, they must be of a base and afraid Disposition, and such a Kind of mean and selfish Conduct proves that they are not, strictly speaking, honest Men, and therefore not fit for Friendships or to have any Trust or Confidence reposed in them. With Respect to those who act thus for the Sake of Peace, this With, however amiable, is not just, nor will Peace be secured for any Length of Time by such an unmanly Submission; for some discerning Persons will see through such a spiritless Servility, and it will either cause such a Time-server to be insulted, or secretly despised; be-

[under] sides

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Ie

It is this high Generosity of Spirit, this inflexible Virtue, this Regard to Principle, superior to all interested Views, whether of publick Praise, or private Advantage, which has ever marked the Characters of those who have eminently distinguished themselves in PUBLICK Life; who have patronised the Cause of Justice against powerful Oppressors; who, in critical Times, have supported the falling Rights and Liberties of Men, and have reflected Honour on their Nation and Country. Such Persons may have been scoffed at by some among whom they lived; but Posterity has done them ample Justice, and they are the Persons, whose Names are recorded to future Ages, and who are thought & spoken of with Admiration.

(*) sides, a proper Degree of Spirit and Courage in a good Cause is one of the best Means to preserve Peace, and above all, an *internal* Peace is more valuable than That which is only external, the Temporizer cannot enjoy That, for being led into the Mazes of Duplicity, he must be continually in Fear and Agitation, and consequently very unhappy.

This deceitful Intercourse is too common amongst those who are called People of Fashion, and therefore it is termed by some Politeness, and the Knowledge of the World; according to the Maxims of this Kind of Policy, with the grave and the good, you must seem to be as the best of them, and with the gay and the vicious you must also act as they do. This Kind of Conduct forms a Man of the World, or a *varnished* Character; but let it be remembered, that he who adopts it, not only acts inconsistently with Religion, but whatever he may plead in Defence of such a shameful Versatility of Conduct, he is no honest Man.

of Morals; they not only expose themselves to just Contempt, but propogate Sentiments very dangerous to Society. For if we loosen the Regard due to Virtue in ANY of its Parts, we begin to sap the Whole of it. No Man, (as it has been often said,) becomes entirely profligate AT ONCE; he deviates, Step by Step, from Conscience. If loose Casuistry were to prevail, open Dishonesty, Falsehood and Treachery would speedily grow out of those complying Principles, those Relaxations of Virtue, which he would represent to be necessary for every Man who knows the World.

Above all things, therefore, take heed, not to falsify the Truth, either from Weakness, or any worldly Motive. There is no capitulating with the Law of God; it has the same Force at all Times, and is actuated uniformly by one unvaried Spirit.

Truth, then, is to be not only generally, but universally observed towards ALL Men: "Speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour."

This is the LAST Article wherein we are to explain the Extent of the Duty before us. — As ALL Men must speak it; so we must speak it to ALL Men.

There are Many in the World who make it a Matter of Glory, and by no Means think it a Breach

of

of Religion, to circumvent by Falsehood and Treachery, by whatever Means, People who are distinct and unknown to them, and who are of different Principle or Profession from themselves. — But,

If there be any Reality in Religion, it must be good, and that towards ALL Men; and to be defective in it, especially in its most material Part and Characteristic, must argue great Imperfection in us.

But, that Truth, which is expressed in the Text as due to our NEIGHBOUR, comprehends ALL Mankind, and is to be expressed to them as Occasion shall order it, is evident from the wise Solution of our blessed Saviour to that Question of the self-justifying Lawyer, "and who is my Neighbour?" — Where we find a Samaritan dealing-out good Offices plentifully to a Jew, who neither had, nor would have any Dealings with him.

So that no Distance of Country, or Difference of Profession or Persuasion, can justify us in the least Untruth; but "we must speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour;" (i.e) towards ALL Men.

As to the Reasons persuading to the Observance of Truth, they are powerful and strong.

The Apostle here gives two, the One preceding, the Other subsequent to the Text.

In the next, he exhorts us to "put on the New Man, which, after God, is created in Righteousness and true Holiness."

We should "speak Truth every Man with his Neighbour," because we cannot, without This, be like unto God.

As God is true in all the Declarations of his Mind, with Respect to us, we cannot, therefore, be like Him, nor "be created in Righteousness, after his Image," unless there be the same Truth in us, and in all our Words. — Indeed,

Our Religion is WHOLY Truth, in its Author, its End, and the Means it prescribes.

Our Maker is therein represented as a "God that cannot Lie:" and tho' He is infinitely benevolent, yet He is so in such a Manner, as is consistent with his other infinite Excellencies; and therefore, (as the Apostle expresses it,) "cannot lie," not to serve even the Good of his Creatures. We are, therefore, undoubtedly bound to a faithful Adherence to Truth in every possible Circumstance, whether present Convenience, or Inconvenience attend it.

And, — As the Author, so the End and Means of the Religion we are Members of, are nothing else but Truth and Rectitude. — In Heaven, we know, it is in the highest Perfection; for therein nothing enters

enters that worketh Deceit, or that either loveth or maketh a Lie;" but Truth reigns in every Affection; and therefore must be our Preparative for it, whilst we are here on Earth.

A second Reason proposed by the Apostle for the due Observance of the Precept before us, is, "because we are MEMBERS one of another."

The Force of which Argument lies in This, [viz] that as the Members of an human Body are united by certain Laws of Communication, and have the same common Interests; so, whether we consider ourselves under any of the various Distinctions, as Members of Society or Grace, we are severally, in our different Capacities, obliged to promote the common Good and Happiness of it; which we can no otherwise do, than by avoiding all Insincerity and Falsehood whatever, which have a direct Tendency to destroy the natural Order & fundamental Rights of all Men. Every Member of Society, (from the very End for which God hath given Speech to Mankind) having a just & inalienable Right to demand it of all Men.

That Truth and Sincerity are necessary to the Support of Society, is universally agreed; & therefore every private Member, who enjoys the Protection and other Benefits of Society, should certainly

contribute his Share to the Publick Good, and be faithful in his Words as well as Actions, according to the Will of our Maker, who hath placed us in Society, and required of us the mutual Discharge of those Duties to each other, "as Members one of another," which are necessary to rational Creatures in that Situation.

This is both Reason and Duty. It is REASONABLE, if we consider ourselves only as in a State of Nature, where we are all "Members One of another," and mutually require each other's Assistance.

It is DUTY, under the Appointment of God, who made us so; who "has not only made of ONE Blood all Nations of Men to dwell on the Face of all the Earth," (as the Apostle expresseth it,) but hath derived them all from the same common Parents: so that our Obligation hereto hath been binding from the Creation.

Whenever, therefore, any Duty is pressed upon us, "as Members one of another," we must consider ourselves as such by the Appointment of Providence, and then the Argument will be conclusive.

When we talk of NATURAL Rights and MORAL Fitnesses, we must look on them as pointing out the Will of our Maker, and then they will be of real Force.

When we speak of the Use or Abuse of Speech, we must regard it as the Gift of God for the Service of Men; and then we may insist, that it ought never to be perverted.

In this Light we fix our Virtue on a sure Basis: it has all the Weight of every other Scheme for the Foundation of Moral Virtue, with a more solid additional Strength of its own. — But further,

We are not only Brethren by NATURE, but by GRACE also; and must therefore consider ourselves "as Members one of another," not merely in a POLITICAL, but RELIGIOUS Capacity. We are not only SOCIAL Creatures, but CHRISTIANS; and, by that Name and Character, are bound to stricter Degrees of Truth, than the Heathen World.

The Christian Doctrine contains full and express Precepts for the invariable Observance of Truth, not confining the Grounds of it to its temporal Advantages; but representing its opposite Vice, in every Respect, offensive.

The Rule therefore is, that where the Law hath made no Distinction, there we must make none, but must act up to the full Extent of the Precept.

The Scripture hath prescribed Truth without any Exception; Reason also as strongly pleading for it. — The Love of Truth, therefore, is the first

Step to Virtue, and the Disregard of it, the Road to every Vice: Without it Men cease to be sociable Creatures, and Speech were given in vain, if we are not to know one another's Minds by it. Its Design is to communicate our Thoughts fairly and freely, to our mutual Profit; and not to disguise, & so, by deceiving, hurt one another. (*) In a Word,

Truth is the Band of Union, and the Basis of human Happiness. (‡) Without this Virtue there is no Reliance upon Language, no Confidence in Friendship, nor Security even in Promises & Oaths.

"Lie not, then, One to another, seeing that ye have put-off the Old-Man with his Deeds," (Satan, who is a Liar, and the Father of Lies,") "and have put-on the New-Man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of God that created us:" (i,e) because we profess to be conformed to the Image of God, we should therefore more particularly charge ourselves with all Truth and Faithfulness; for, "We are Members one of another." Truth

(*) There is nothing so delightful as the hearing, or speaking of the Truth; for this Reason there is no Conversation so agreeable as that of the Man of Integrity, who hears without any Design to betray, and speaks without any Intention to deceive.

(‡) *O magna Vis Veritatis! quæ contrà Hominum Ingenia, Calliditatem, Sollertiam, contràque fictas omnium Insidias, facilè per se ipsam dimicat.*

Truth is the Basis of every Virtue: Let us chuse, (as we value the Approbation of Heaven, or the Esteem of the World,) cultivate the Love of Truth in all our Proceedings; as be directed and confirmed. Ingenuity and Candor possess the most powerful Charms; they bespeak universal Favour, and carry an Apology for almost every Failing; it is the most compendious Wisdom, and also an excellent Instrument for the speedy Dispatch of Business; it creates Confidence in those with whom we have to deal; (*) saves the Labour of many Inquiries, and brings

(*) How much soever Mankind may disagree in other Matters, or how unwilling soever they may be to agree in this; yet they with one Consent, acknowledge the Excellence of Truth, & the real Worth of Innocence. — Sincerity gains Access, by its natural Efficacy; it needs no Arts to recommend it, but is therefore most acceptable, because it is without Art or Design.

There is no Character more desireable, more generally beloved, than that of a plain Honest-Man; it enters into the Hearts of all with irresistible Force, like the Gospel of Christ, which obtained a ready Assent to itself, by the Clearness of its own Evidence; it was not set off with a pompous Shew of Eloquence, or the "enticing Words of Man's Wisdom," but trusted to its own Power, and appeared as it really was, in a plain unaffected Narration.

An impartial Regard to Truth, and a stedfast Resolution of doing our Duty, are infinitely more valuable in themselves, than all the acquired Ornaments, and the most fashionable Rules of Conversation; and a good Man has something truly engaging in his Deportment, that pleases more effectually, than the plausible Civilities and seeming Cour-

beings things to us. In few Words. (*) Indeed, Considering the mutual Benefits that we enjoy, as Members of Society, we cannot but delight to pursue the Means that convey those Benefits to us. And, nothing does more effectually convey them, than the Trust & Confidence that is put in us. And, Nothing confirms that Trust and Confidence more, than

ivy of the fine Gentleman, and the enfnaring Embraces and fair Promises of the finished Courtier, — Indeed,

There is nothing more odious than Flattery; and whilst it labours to conceal its Baseness, it shows the Excellency of Truth, and confesses that it is amiable in the Eyes even of a prejudiced Spectator; for it puts on the Appearance of it, and studies to be unlike itself; for the Mind, tho vicious and depraved, cannot relish open and undisguised Flattery, but rejects it with Abhorrence: And, the Sinner looks down with Contempt upon the despicable Wretch that prostitutes his Reason to the Service of a Lie, and renders himself the most vile and abject of Creatures, to form a transitory Interest, or purchase a pretended and forced Approbation.

Such is the Value of Truth, that they that deviate from it, must seem to adhere to it; and the most skilful Flatterer tries to persuade the Person he commends, that he hath certainly those Virtues which he falsely ascribes to him: his Commendation is as nothing, unless it passes for Truth, and his Designs are disappointed unless he is believed.

How far preferable, then, is Truth, which stands on a sure Foundation, and does not court an uncertain Opinion or a precarious Esteem; but always pleases, when the Mind sees it as it is; and which prepares and forces the Way to Acceptance, even through the grossest Prejudice.

(*) *Utilius nihil est Homini, quam vera loqui.*

Sinceritas laudanda est.

than a good Reputation: And, nothing more certainly gives us a good Reputation, than the Experience of our Honesty and Integrity.

Even those that have too little Regard to Truth and Sincerity in their own Practice, are yet constrained to admire it in others, and are best satisfied in themselves, when they deal with an honest & faithful Man, & commit their most important Concerns to the Charge of him that will not betray them.

If we pass from the necessary Affairs of Life to the innocent Pleasures of our ordinary Conversation, even those Pleasures derive all their Sweetness from their Sincerity: when we are wearied with the Business of the Day, and are willing to refresh ourselves with the Conversation of our Friends and Acquaintance, how agreeable and delightful is the Refreshment, when there is no Suspicion of Falsehood, no Danger of opening our Minds too far, nor Fear of being taken in the Snares of perfidious Men!

Indeed, if a Man were only to deal in the World for a Day, and should never have Occasion more to converse with Mankind, nor ever more need their good Opinion, or good Word, it were THEN no great Matter, (we speak as to the Concernments of the World,) if a Man spent his Reputation all at once: But, if he be to continue in the World, and

would have the Advantage of Reputation whilſt he is in it, let him make uſe of Truth & Sincerity in all his Words and Actions; for nothing but This will carry a Man through: All other will fail, but This will hold out to the End. It is the Obſervation of Solomon, "The Lip of Truth ſhall be eſtabliſhed forever; but a lying Tongue is but for a Moment."

So many are the Advantages of Sincerity in this World, that it is almoſt unneceſſary to draw any Arguments from the other. But if they are great, as it poſſeſſes the Mind with Peace, & brings down the Bleſſings of Heaven upon us; how much greater are they, as it raiſeth us to Heaven! And, of this we are aſſured in the plaineſt Terms from the Royal Pſalmiſt, whoſe Heart, if ever it "indited a good Matter, - if ever his Tongue was the Pen of a ready Writer," it was in the following important Queſtion, and the ſatisfactory faithful Anſwer which the Spirit of God returned to him, or which, thro' his Direction, he returned to himſelf; "Lord! who ſhall dwell in thy Tabernacle, or who ſhall reſt upon thy Holy Hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt Life, and doth the thing that is right, and ſpeaketh the Truth from his Heart."

In this he ſurpaſſed the reſt of the Children of Men; "full of Grace were his Lips," & they droped the Dew of Heaven." — But further, In

In Order to secure this great Point of speaking Truth; (besides considering carefully and frequently the Advantages of it, with the Evils of departing from it,) I shall now

Lastly, Lay down the following Rules, to enable us to persevere in the Wisdom of so good a Choice.

Those which I shall mention, shall be with a View to the usual Temptations to the Violations of it, [viz] Integrity of Heart and Life, - Humility, Contentment, - and a proper Reservedness from too much Loquacity; for almost all Lies are calculated to conceal some former Misbehaviour, or to gratify some present Vanity, or to promote some future Interest, or thro a Vein of Talkativeness to amuse and divert. — And first,

Integrity of Heart and Life.

He that would speak the Truth with his Neighbour," (i.e. with and towards ALL Men,) must purify and cleanse his Mind from all corrupt and vicious Thoughts. For, if the Fountain be clean, the Streams that flow from it, will be clean also; But, if this be corrupt, it will send forth the Waters of Bitterness, and taint the whole Course of our Actions. The Heart is the Root and Foundation either of Good or Evil, and if this be unsound, and has a

Canker lurking within it, we cannot safely rely upon it: and how fair soever our Pretensions are, they are no more than an empty Pretence, or a specious Covering, that hath a Shew for a Time, and then (like blasted Fruit) turns to Decay.

As therefore we would deal sincerely with One another, we should carefully put away every unreasonable Prejudice against our Neighbour; for Prejudice perverts the Judgment, and misguides the Will, and gives an ill Turn to all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions. This therefore we must remove, with all Envy, Malice, Pride, and Covetousness, which do, in an especial Manner, pervert our Sentiments of others; and will, in the End, as naturally carry us out into undue Lengths in Conversation, beyond either Soberness or Truth.

To this Integrity of Heart, we must add also Integrity of Life, (i.e.) uniform and universal Righteousness.

This would cut off most of the Occasions and Inducements to prevaricate from the Truth.

He, whose Actions are TRUE, will have no End to serve by making his Words false. If his former Carriage has been sincere, it will be to his Credit & Advantage to own and avow it; and he will stand in no need of Dissimulation, since his Conduct will bear

bear the Light, and wants no Cover or Disguise.

They are indirect and crooked Dealings which force Men to Subterfuges and Frauds, and which lead them to impose upon their Fellow-Creatures, & to act as if they would impose upon their Maker. "The vile Person, (as the Prophet observes,) will speak Villany, and his Heart will work Iniquity, to practise Hypocrisy, and to utter Error against the Lord." — Indeed,

The Reputation of such Persons can only be kept up by Misrepresentations; and they are therefore under a Kind of Necessity, by wrong Accounts, to persuade others to believe them to be what they ought to be, since they cannot openly and fairly let them know what they are.

Sin is in itself so shameful, that scarce any will acknowledge and justify it: The usual Method therefore is rather to deny the Fact, in Order to avoid the Shame; to aim at concealing the Scandal by Forgery and Falsehood, and to cover one Iniquity by the wilful Commission of another.

This is the Progress of Sin in general, & is often the Origin of this in particular, while Truth is suppressed as the Cause of Wickedness, and Guile is doubled, only that it may appear like Innocence. Whereas, the Remedy is easy and obvious [viz.]

we muſt always be what we would always be thought to be; we muſt not do what we would be aſhamed to have known; and then the Arts of Prevarication and Hypocriſy would be needleſs.

Fifthly, A ſecond Rule offered, as a Preſervative of Truth, is that of Humility.

If we think not of ourſelves more highly than we ought to think, and are willing that Others ſhould form their Eſteem of us by the ſame Meaſure, we ſhall not be under a Temptation to falſify in our Diſcourſe, in Order to make ourſelves appear more conſiderable in their Eyes, than we are.

Modeſty and Prudence would rather decline all Occaſions of repeating thoſe Truths, which immediately concern Ourſelves, and our Glory; but would abhor the Thought of forging groundleſs Relations to magnify the Eſteem of our Character, and to raiſe Expectations which we are conſcious we cannot anſwer.

There is, indeed, as much Folly as Fault in ſuch ridiculous Forgeries. But the Neceſſity of this Caution, and the Fact on which it is grounded, can ſcarce have eſcaped the Obſervation of the moſt inattentive. Even thoſe, who have no heavy Load of Guilt on their Conſciences, which needs Concealment, nor yet have any further injurious Deſign to

serve by Deceit, will yet, merely to raise the Idea of themselves amongst those with whom they converse, unite exceedingly with the Sanctedness of Truth, relate surprizing Accounts without any real Foundation, or add to, and aggregate the Circumstances, till, in the End, it amount to as different a Report, and as gross a Falsification. (*) Pride

(*) —— *Sæpe Figuræ*
Intuimur miras. —— *Mirabile dictu!*
Tædet jam audire eadem millies,
Quæ in magnâquâ Nocte Diequè fiunt.

"An unseasonable Tale will always be in the Mouth of the unwise."

Ut Gallus, illicò Cantu superbum sese tollat? Ita, quidem sua Facinora jactant ipsi, et plurimùm Laudis ridiculi sunt Venatori.

Ridicula in Imbelli Virtutis Ostentatio.

Bragging and Boasting are common Impertinences in Conversation, equally among Travellers and Soldiers, as well as Poets & Painters, who never out-did Nature, but only in the Lie. They who boast talk, but more, for Deeds are silent. They who pretend themselves to know what they are not, will always be prating of what they do not know. *Ille quidem semper Ostentationem maximam habet Patientiæ, et nihil aliud intus: Ita quidem semper Ostentationem, et venalem Jactationem nihil habent: Cupressi sunt plenæ finitis Sermonis illorum; Illi enim magni sunt, nec tamen alios servant Fructus.* — Old Men and Travellers lie by Authority.

The Man, who, with undaunted Toils,
Seals unknown Seas, to unknown Soils:
With various Wonders feasts his Sight;
What stranger Wonders does he write?
We read, and, in Delcription, view
Great Nature, which we never knew!

Pride and Vanity are continually extolling themselves beyond the Truth: Friendly therefore to this Interest, muſt be a modeſt and humble, (i.e.) juſt

For when we riſk no Contradiction,
It prompts the Tongue to deal in Fiction.
Thoſe things about ſtarſh ſie grow,
I grant are ſtrange; yet may be true.

Leſt Men ſuſpect your Tale untrue, ... (a)
Keep Probability in View.
The Trav'ller, leaping o'er thoſe Bounds,
The Credit of his Tale confounds.
Who, with his *Tongue*, hath Armies routed,
Makes e'en his real Courage doubted.
But Flatt'ry never ſeems abſurd.
The flatter'd always take your Word;
Impoſſibilities ſeem juſt,
They take the ſtrongeſt Praiſe on Truſt.
Hyperboles, though ne'er ſo great,
Will ſtill come ſhort of Self-Conceit.

(a) The Reſemblance of Truth is the utmoſt Limit of Poetick Licence. Beyond the actual Works of Nature a Poet may go, but not beyond the conceived Poſſibility of it. A probable Lie will ſooner be believed, than a prodigious Truth. See No. 418. of the Spectator.

Extra Poteſtatem quid prodeſt jactare Superbus?
Quodcunque offendis mihi ſic, incredulus odi.
Imbecillorum Superbiloquentia ſunt deridenda.
Non qui magna loquitur, ſed qui facit.
Facta ſtant Verba.

As the beſt Garments grow old with often wearing, ſo ſtrange Reports wax ſtale with too much telling. A Man of Underſtanding, therefore, will keep his boldeſt Flights within the Bounds of com-

just and true Esteem of ourselves, suitable to our Nature and our Faith, to the Infirmities we at present feel, and the undeserved Mercies we have our hope for.

Such a Sense of our Condition will remove the very Aim of all self-aggrandizing Arts, and teach us to acquiesce in such a Degree of Esteem, as our Attainments will procure us.

The Connection and Influence of this Advice to the Purpose, are thus represented by St James, "Who, (says he) is a wise Man and endued with Knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good Conversation his Works with Meekness and Wisdom: But if ye have bitter Strife and Envying in your Hearts, glory not, and lie not against the Truth: This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where Envying and Strife is, there also is Confusion and every Evil Work. But the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy." Another

and gentle Limits by the Rules of Probability and Decorum in his most adventurous Sallies of Imagination, and never relate Improbabilities, tho he has Authority for them. Other Vices are like light Money; but Lying, counterfeit or false Coin, which an honest Man ought not to pay, tho he himself received it.

Another Rule, offered as a Guard and Help to Veracity, is that of Resignation and Contentment in such a Degree of worldly Conveniences as can be attained by the Methods of Honesty and Industry.

An eager Desire of unjust Gains introduces Falsehood into all Sorts of Commerce. Some corrupt Interest engages the Heart, and then, "out of the Abundance thereof, the Mouth speaketh."

A Disregard, then, to all such worldly Interests, as are not within the Reach of Innocence, will secure us from this Temptation; and if we are contented and resigned in our Station, we shall never design to deceive others in Order to defraud them.

Truth, (as we have seen,) will best serve every Purpose which ought to be served; and therefore, if our Aims are honest, and our Views are moderate, our Hearts will be sincere, and our Tongue faithful.

The Apostle's Exhortation is grounded on this Reason; "Having Food and Raiment, (says he,) let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition. For the Love of Money is the Root of all Evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themselves through with many Sorrows."

The

The last Rule is, that we be moderate in the Quantity of our Discourse, lest we fall into Falsehood unawares.

Those who suffer themselves to run into needless Talk, just as their present Humour disposes them, or the present Company will be best pleased, or hold out almost any thing, rather than say nothing, must be perpetually transgressing the Command and Duty before us; for he that talks much, must sometimes talk in vain; surely (according to the acknowledged Decision of the Wise Man,) "In a Multitude of Words there wanteth not Sin: therefore, He that refraineth his Tongue, is wise."

I shall only add upon the Whole, that the Cause of Truth is better supported by Prevention, than Remedy, by guarding at first against the Violation of it, than by After-schemes of recovering the Habit. The latter, indeed, is more necessary, where the former has been neglected; but Custom, bad Customs especially, are not easily broken thro', and the Delight of Innocence and original Virtue is thereby forfeited.

Let our speediest Resolutions and Practices therefore be suitable to this Caution: Let us be watchful against every single Deviation Ourselves, and

impress early on our Youth & Dependents, a strong Sense of their Duty in this Respect; that they may not have the Difficulty either of breaking thro an evil Habit, or sinking miserably under it, but continue invariably in the Love and Practice of this amiable Virtue, which will best serve their own Interests, and render them acceptable both to God and Man.

The Sum of all is, our natural Conscience intuitively tells us, that there is an original, eternal, unalterable Regard due to Truth; Our natural Light assures us, that it is founded in the Reason and Fitness of things, and is the Measure of the Divine Proceedings. The sacred Writings concur in the Account, and confirm it; and, without the Difficulty of argumentative Deductions, require of us an Imitation of the Divine Being in general, and in particular that we never deviate from that Truth, which, in its Perfection, is a divine Attribute, and is the peculiar Ornament of social, rational, and religious Beings. Experience, finally, convinces us of the Usefulness, as well as Excellency of this Precept, and offers this additional Argument to the Observance of it, that besides the intrinsick Fitness of it, and that supreme Authority that has enjoined it, it is likewise of Importance to us in our present corrupt

rupt State, and would be the more extensively beneficial, the more strictly and punctually it was observed.

Whoever, therefore, can dispense with himself as to This and Other MORAL Duties, (and which therefore, because they are MORAL, are of indispensible Obligation,) and makes no Scruple of a Lie, nor Conscience of Truth, what Badge soever he may wear, or what Title soever he may call himself by, it is as impossible that such an One can be a true Christian, as it is to reconcile the "God of Truth," and the "Father of Lies:" "his Religion is vain, and the Truth is not in him."

It becomes us, therefore, who worship the "God of Truth," to be strict Observers of it, in all things.

Wherefore, "buy the Truth, and sell it not; also Wisdom, and Instruction, with every perfect Gift:" For, "where Truth is, it maketh not ashamed," but "we shall have Boldness and Confidence not only before all Men," but also at the last Day, "before the great God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, our Judge himself, the great Bishop and Shepherd of our Souls."

"O! Thou, then, who art enamoured with the Beauties of Truth, and hast fixed thy Heart on the

"Simplicity of her Charms, hold fast thy Fidelity unto her, and forſake her not: the Conſtancy of thy Virtue ſhall crown thee with Honour."

Sermon

SERMON CXXI.

Proper Oaths, their Lawfulness.

Matt. v. 34. "Swear not at all."

There is unquestionably, at first Sight, a strong Appearance that all Oaths, without Exception, are forbidden; and it is no Wonder that many have been carried away by that Appearance, and held it unlawful to swear upon any Occasion. — But,

Whoever will examine the Matter thoroughly, can hardly fail, (we think,) to be fully satisfied of the contrary.

That an Oath is not unlawful in its own Nature, needs very little Proof; it having been used by the best Men, on solemn Occasions, in all Ages of the World. It is an Appeal to God, either upon a Testimony that is given, or a Promise that is made, confirming the Truth of the One, and the Fidelity of the Other. It is an Appeal to God who knoweth all things, and will judge all Men: so it is an Act that acknowledges both his Omniscience, and his

being

being the Governor of the World, who will judge all at the laſt Day according to their Deeds, & muſt be ſuppoſed to have a more immediate Regard to ſuch Acts, in which Men make him a Party. It is acknowledging ourſelves to be in his Preſence, and that He is a Witneſs of what we ſay, and an Avenger of all Falſehood. — Now,

Theſe are Truths all of them highly honourable to God, and cannot therefore be ſinful in Man, being an Act of Piety & Worſhip towards our Maker.

And, — Beſides this, they are highly uſeful. Men are ſo exceedingly prone both to conceal Truth, and to ſpeak Untruths, that they have need of the moſt powerful Reſtraints to keep them from it; and theſe to be enforced in the moſt affecting Manner on their Conſciences.

Swearing, then, is, in its own Nature, a religious Act; and, as ſuch, is enjoined in various Places in holy Writ.

It muſt be owned, indeed, that great Numbers will certainly ſpeak Truth without an Oath, & alſo that too many will not ſpeak it with one. But,

The Generality of Mankind are of the middle Sort, neither ſo virtuous as to be ſafely truſted, in Caſes of Importance, on their bare Word; nor yet

ſo

so hardened as to violate a more solemn Engagement. Accordingly we find, by Experience, that many will boldly swear what they will by no Means venture to swear.

This, therefore, shews the Necessity of insisting upon the strongest Security, and the Advantage thereof, is, that when we have it thus given us, we are naturally disposed to acquiesce in the Matter; and "an Oath for Confirmation becomes the End of all Strife."

This Practice is of so great Consequence to Human Society, that it could scarce be kept in Order without it. Government would many Times be very insecure, and for the faithful Discharge of Offices of great Trust, in which the Welfare of the Publick is nearly concerned, it is not possible to find any Security equal to THAT of an Oath; because the Obligation of it reacheth to the most secret and hidden Practices of Men, and takes hold of them in many Cases where the Penalty of human Law cannot have any Awe or Force upon them: and especially as it is, (as the civil Law expresseth it) "the best Means of ending Controversies." — And,

Where Men's Estates and Lives are concerned, no Evidence, but what is assured by an Oath, will be thought sufficient to decide the Matter, so as to

give full and general Satisfaction to Mankind, consequently, in Matters of so great Concernment, when Men have all the Assurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to sit down, and rest satisfied with it.

Among all Nations, therefore, an Oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and satisfactory Way of deciding such Controversies.

Possibly, indeed, a small Community may, by strict Discipline, subsist, for some Time, wholly without it; and perhaps a small Sect in the midst of a larger Community, may, under due Limitations, be excused from it also, (*) whilst they continue sufficiently

(*) It is readily granted that there is scarce any Error whatsoever that hath a more plausible Colour from Scripture, than This; which makes the Case of those who are seduced into it, the more to be pitied; but then it ought to be considered, how much this Doctrine of the Unlawfulness of Oaths, reflects upon the Christian Religion; since it is so evidently prejudicial both to human Society in general, and particularly to those Persons that entertain it. Of the Inconveniency of this Doctrine to human Society, we have already spoken; but besides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them suspected to Government, and in many Cases incapable of the common Benefits of Justice and other Privileges of human Society. And, (which is very considerable in this Matter,) it sets those who refuse Oaths upon very unequal Terms with the rest of Mankind, if, where the Estates, and Lives of Men are equally concerned, their bare Testimony shall be admitted without an Oath, and Others shall be obliged to speak upon Oath: nothing being more certain in Experience, than that many

Men

nicely distinguish from the Rest of their Words, and whilst the Value which they set on this Indulgence makes them careful of doing any thing to forfeit it. — But,

Were such a Permission to become general throughout Nations and Kingdoms, and all Men thereby released at once from what they looked on as their strongest Obligation to Truth, it is easy to guess what universal Confusion would inevitably follow.

All Ages and Nations of the World have been sensible of This, (than which there is not a more certain Indication that a thing is agreeable to the Law of Nature, and the best Reason of Mankind,) and consequently have required the most highly esteemed of their Subjects, on every fit Occasion to confirm

[illegible] when they will not be perjured: God having planted in the natural Consciences of Men a Secret Dread of Perjury above most other Sins. And, this Inconvenience is so great, as renders those who refuse Oaths in all Cases almost intolerable to human Society.

This is not spoken either to their Prejudice, or to persuade them to save Death by their Interest; but only as asserting, that it is no [illegible] either of a wise or good Man, to take up an Opinion, (especially such an one, as is greatly to his Prejudice,) upon slight [illegible]. And this very Consideration, that it is so much to their Inconvenience, may justly move them to be very careful in the Examination of it.

confirm their Teſtimony by an Appeal to God. (*)

And, — That this was not a degenerate Practice of Mankind, (like that of Idolatry,) is from hence evident, that not only amongſt the HEATHENS, but, (when God ſeparated to himſelf a peculiar People,) amongſt the holy Patriarchs alſo, from early Times, good Men have aſked, and equally good Men have given, the Security of an Oath; which, had it been a thing evil in itſelf, or forbidden by the Law of Nature, would not have been done. — But further,

Another undeniable Argument for the Lawfulneſs of

(*) If we conſider the Matter on the Principles of *natural* Religion, an Oath is an Act of Worſhip and Homage done to God; and is a very powerful Mean for preſerving the Juſtice and Order of the World. All deciſions in Juſtice muſt be founded upon Evidence; *Two* muſt be believed rather than *One*; therefore the more Terror that is ſtruck into the Minds of Men, either when they give their Teſtimony, or when they bind themſelves by Promiſes, and the deeper that this goes, it will both oblidge them to the greater Caution in what they ſay, and to the greater Strictneſs in what they promiſe. Since therefore Truth and Fidelity are ſo neceſſary to the Security and Commerce of the World, and ſince an Appeal to God is the greateſt Mean that can be thought on to bind Men to an Exactneſs and Strictneſs in *every* thing with which that Appeal is joined; therefore, the Uſe of an Oath is fully juſtified upon the Principles of natural Religion. This has ſpread itſelf ſo univerſally thro the World, and began ſo early that it may well be reckoned a Branch of the Law and Light of Nature.

of Oaths, in that God himself, (in Condescension to the Custom of Men, who use to confirm and give Credit to what they say by an Oath,) is represented in Scripture, as SWEARING to Men. Which certainly He would not have done, had an Oath been unlawful in itself. For This had been to comply with Men in an evil Practice, and by his own Example to give Countenance to it in the highest Manner.

"The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent;" "I have sworn by my Holiness, that I will not fail David." — Again; "I swear by myself, (saith the Lord,) that this House shall become a Desolation." — And, Upon Abraham's offering up his Son Isaac, "By myself have I sworn, (saith the Lord,) for because thou hast done This thing, and hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me, that in Blessing I will bless thee."

Be it, then, that the Use of Oaths is founded upon the Corruption of our Nature, upon our Falsehood & Instability; the Almighty, at least, is free from this Suspicion: He is not to be charged with Insincerity. Yet "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counsel, confirmed it by an Oath; that by two immutable things," (i.e) his immutable Counsel and inviolable

olable Oath, "in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have a ſtrong Conſolation, who have fled for Refuge to lay-hold upon the Hope, ſet before us." — Now,

If He ſwore, who cannot ſin, we may be confident it is no Sin to ſwear. — Moreover,

As God himſelf is pleaſed ſometimes to ſwear by Himſelf, becauſe he could ſwear by no greater; ſo He hath not only permitted, but commanded us to ſwear by his Name;

"Thou ſhalt fear the Lord, thy God, and ſerve him, and ſhalt ſwear by his Name." — And again:

"Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, and him ſhalt thou ſerve, and to him ſhalt thou cleave, and ſwear by his Name;" from whence it appears, that He hath made this a Part of that Worſhip and Honour which we ought to pay him; and that it is as much our Duty, upon Occaſion, to ſwear by his Name, as it to fear and ſerve him; and in thoſe very Commandments wherein He requires us "not to take his Name in VAIN, nor ſwear by his Name FALSELY," He plainly intimates, that we may, and ought to ſwear TRULY by it.

God tempts no Man to Sin, but directs us to that which is right and lawful before him; and therefore, having directed us by his Prophet how to ſwear, [viz.]

"in

tice, Judgment, and Righteousness," (8) hath hereby given us an unanswerable Argument, that we may lawfully do it, provided we do but observe his Directions given.

Hence it is said, that "every one who thus sweareth, shall be commended; but the Mouth of them that speak Lyes," or swear falsely, "shall be stopped." — And,

"He that sweareth to his Neighbour, and disappointeth him not," is reckoned among those "who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord, and dwell in the Tabernacle of the Most High." — Indeed, God challenges this peculiarly to Himself: "How can I pardon thee for this? — Thy Children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no Gods." Where He plainly makes the Swearing by any Other but Himself to be downright forsaking him, because by it Men give THAT Honour unto Others, which is due only to the true God.

From whence it appears, that it is so far from being unlawful, that it is a necessary Duty to swear by the true God, and by him only.

Accordingly we find the holy Angels themselves swearing by him. "And the Angel, (saith St. John,)

(8) *Animadvertendum est quod Jusjurandum hos habeat Comites, Veritatem, Judicium, atque Justitiam; si ista desierint, nequaquam Jusjurandum erit, sed Perjurium.*

John,) which I saw stand upon the Sea, and upon the Earth, lifted up his Hand to Heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever." The like also we find in Daniel. (xii. 7.)

As for the Saints in the Old Testament, there is nothing more frequently recorded of them, than their administring and taking of Oaths:

"Abraham made his Steward swear by the Lord, the God of Heaven, and the God of Earth;" but, such Examples are so frequent that I need not mention them. — Indeed,

Men are not only introduced as swearing to God, but are, under the Law of Moses, expresly commanded to "swear by his Name," to one another; and Judges and Magistrates are required to administer Oaths in doubtful Cases. If there be a Controversy between two, "the Oath of the Lord shall be between them," and by that the Judges shall determine the Cause; and, in the Case of Jealousy, "the Priest shall charge the Woman with an Oath."

Thus Abimelech made Abraham swear to be true to him; and Abraham, his Servant, respecting a Wife for his Son Isaac; and Jacob, Joseph, concerning his Burial; and many more: All which plainly shew, that the Saints of God, in those Days, made no Scruple at all of giving or taking Oaths,

but

but check them upon it as their Duty, in all proper Cases so to do.

Under the Law we find many Covenants sealed by an Oath, which was a sacred Bond, as appears by the Story of the GIBEONITES. — There was also a special Constitution in the Jewish Religion (Levit. v. 1.) by which One in Authority might put others under an Oath, and adjure them either to do somewhat, or to declare some Truth. The Law was, that "when any Soul," (i.e) Man, "sinned, and heard the Voice of Swearing," (i.e) Adjuration, "and was a Witness whether he hath seen it or known it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity," (i.e.) be guilty of Perjury. (*) So the

(*) The among the Jews, the Form of giving an Oath to Witnesses or Others, (as prescribed in their Law,) was not by tendering a formal Oath to them, as the Custom is amongst us, but by *adjuring* them, (i.e) requiring them to answer upon Oath - yet no just Exception can be taken against the Ceremonies in Use among us respecting them, that they are not found in Scripture; For, this was always Matter of Liberty; and several Nations have used several Rites and Ceremonies in them.

Among the Ancients we find these.

Per Mare, per Terras, per Cœli Numina juro.
Per Terram, Mare, et Sidera juro. Per Cœlum hoc, et Sidera juro,
Per Superos, et si qua Fides Tellure sub ima est.
Juro per Jubar hoc Solis Radiis insigne coruscis.
Adjuro Stygii Caput implacabile Fontis.
—— *Per Superos atque hoc Cœli spirabile Lumen.*

the Form then was, the Judge or Parent did adjure all Persons to declare their Knowledge of any Particular. They charged this upon them with an Oath or Curse; and all Persons were then bound by that Oath.

——Per æterni Ignes, et non violabile Numen
Attestor Numen. —— ——
Audiat hæc Genitor qui fœdera Fulmine sancit.
Tango Aras, mediosque Ignes, et Numina testor,
Ossa tibi juro per Matris, et Ossa Parentis,
Si falle, Civis, hen! si mihi uterque gravis.
&c. &c. &c.

It was the Custom of the *Grecians* to swear, laying their Hands upon the *Altar*; which was looked upon as the most sacred Form of swearing. The *Romans*, when they swore by Jupiter, held a Flint in their Hand, and flung it violently from them with these Words, *If I knowingly fake, God so throw me out of all my Possessions, as I do this Stone.*

In Scripture there are two Ceremonies mentioned of Swearing. One, of putting the Hand under the Thigh of him to whom the Oath was made: thus Eliezar swore to Abraham, and Joseph to Jacob. The Other, was by lifting up the Hand to Heaven: thus Abraham expresseth it, "I have lift up my Hand to the Most-High God." And thus God, (condescending to the Manner of Men;) expresseth it, "If I lift up my Hand to Heaven, and swear." In Allusion to this Custom, the Psalmist describes the perjured Person, "whose Mouth speaketh Vanity, and whose Right-Hand is a Right-Hand of Falsehood." Thus also the Angel is represented in the Revelations, as lifting up his Hand and swearing by Him that liveth for ever and ever." And there is not the least Intimation in Scripture that either of these Ceremonies were prescribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily instituted and taken up by Men. And thus among us, the Ceremony of Swearing is by *laying the Hand on the Holy Gospel, and kissing the Book*; which is both very solemn and significant, aggravating Perjury, and making it more deliberate and scandalous. Upon the Whole, It

such an Oath. Thus when Micah (Judg. xvii. 2.) came and confessed, upon his Mother's Adjuration, that he had taken away eleven hundred Shekels, for which he had made her pronounce a Curse upon the Person who had stolen them; and when she had pronounced the Curse, he was put in Fear of it, and said unto her, I heard thee swear, and behold the Money is with me, I took it. Thus when Saul had put the People under a Curse, that they should not eat any Food till Night; and this was thought to be so obliging, that the Violation was capital, and Jonathan was put in Hazard of his Life upon it. Thus the high Priest put our Saviour under the Oath of Adjuration, when he required him to tell whether he was the Messias or not? (Matt. xxvi. 63, 64.) Upon which our Saviour was, according to that Law, upon his Oath; and tho he had continued silent till then, as long as was fit, for him to speak or not, at his Pleasure; yet then he was bound to speak, and so he did, and owned himself to be what he really was. Thus far the Law.

Nor do the Prophets, though they sometimes improve upon the Law, ever make mention of Oaths, but with Honour, provided Men swear in Truth, in Judgment, and in Righteousness; as Jeremiah

It seems to be within the Compass of human Authority, to change the Rites and Manner of Ceremonies, and to put them in such a Method, as may probably work most on the Minds of those who take them. The Institution, in general, is plain; and the making of such Alterations seems to be clearly in the Power of any State or Society of Men. See the 34th Article of Religion.

Jeremiah directs it, in Truth, in Judgment, and Righteousness. (*) And,

For from intimating that under the Messiah this Act of Religion would become unlawful, they foretell, in Passages which must be interpreted of the Gospel-times, that then even God every Knee shall bow, and every Tongue shall swear by his Name.

Having thus shewn the Lawfulness of Oaths on proper and weighty Occasions, I shall shew the Weakness and Insufficiency of the Grounds of the contrary Opinion, whether from Reason or Scripture. First,

(*) There cannot be a greater Provocation offered to God, whose Property is Truth, than to appeal to him to vouch & witness a Falsehood for any one Besides, can be a stronger Argument against the very End of taking Oaths, which is to bring Truth to Light. — Again,

In every lawful Oath, there must be "Judgment:" We must not swear rashly and unadvisedly, but in cool and sober Thoughts, having duly considered how sacred a thing an Oath is. Moreover, we must be fully satisfied that the Occasion is every Way fit and deserving of so sacred a Seal. And finally,

We must swear "in Righteousness:" We must set aside all Respects of Relation or Friendship, and all other Grounds whatsoever of Favour and Affection to any Party concerned; as also the Considerations of Interest or Disadvantage that may happen to Ourselves, regarding only the Truth and Justice of the Cause; whether it be that we give our Oaths for the Defence of the Innocent, or for the Punishment of the Guilty: and we must take Care that we swear not in a wrong Case, tho it were our own, and we should reap never so great a Benefit in carrying our Point.

First, from Reason, It is inferred that the Necessity of an Oath is occasioned by the Want of Truth and Fidelity among Men; And that every Man ought to entertain himself with that Faithfulness and Integrity, as may give Credit and Confirmation to his Word; and then Oaths would be needless.

This Pretence will be fully answered if we consider these Things.

First, That in Matters of great Importance, no other Obligation, besides that of an Oath, hath been thought sufficient among the best and wisest of Men to assure their Fidelity to one another. "Even the best of Men, (to use the Words of a great Author,) have not trusted the best of Men without it:" as we see in very remarkable Instances, where Oaths have been passed between those who might be supposed to have the greatest Confidence in each other; [viz] between Abraham and his old faithful Servant Eliezar; between Father and Son, as Jacob and Joseph, (as already observed;) as also between two of the dearest and most intimate Friends, David and Jonathan, to assure their Friendship to one another; and it had its Effect long after Jonathan's Death, in the saving of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's Son, when Reason of State, and the Security of his Throne seemed to move David strongly to the contrary;

for it is expressly said, that "David spared Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son, because of the Oath of the Lord that was between them;" implying, that had it not been for his Oath, other Considerations might probably have prevailed with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the rest of Saul's Children. — But further,

This Reason which is alledged against Oaths amongst Men, is much stronger against God's confirming his Promise to us by Oath. For He, who is Truth itself, is surely of all others, to be credited upon his bare Word; & yet He condescends to add his Oath to his Word; and therefore, this Reason is evidently of no Force. — But,

Lastly, From Scripture. Our Saviour, in the Words before us, seems altogether to forbid Swearing in any Case. And this Law St. James recites, as that which Christians ought to have a particular and principal Regard to. "Above all things, my Brethren, (says he,) swear not." And he makes the Breach of this Law a deadly Sin; "lest ye fall into Condemnation." (*) But the Authority of our Saviour

(*) When a particular Vice is observed to be predominant, the Preacher sets himself to oppose it with all his Might. He draws out all his Train of Reasons and Arguments. He represents the Irregularity

against

but is alone sufficient, I shall therefore only consider it, especially as they both speak of one and the same thing, [viz.] Oaths, or Swearing in common Conversation and Discourse among Men.

Oaths, against which he is engaged, as the most heinous of Offences: whatever other Crimes we allow, he requires us to beware of this capital Evil, and prohibits every Action that but approaches near it. In the most comprehensive Descriptions, and under the severest Expressions, for the making of necessary Exceptions and Limitations, we are left to our own Reflections, to Nature, and Experience, & to the common Sense of the World. In the main Time, Casuistry being no Part of his Province, he presses forward to dissuade, to rebuke, and threaten. He stays not to look around, and collect all the Cases where his Maxims may take place, nor lets the Force and Flame of his Exhortations die, [illegible] Weight of unseasonable parenthetical Restrictions.

"Above all things, my Brethren, swear not." — How! Is the Sin here forbidden, the worst of all Sins? Grows there no other Offence so rank in that Soil, so fertile of Vice, the Heart of Man? It is indeed [illegible] Possible of Defence, of Excuse, foolish, pitiful, hurtful, dishonourable to the Supreme Being, and detrimental to Mankind. But lo, alas! are many other Vices. All indeed are so, either directly or in their Consequences. But some there are surely so odious, and in their Effects so fatal, that they may be allowed to claim this infamous Pre-eminence; so that he who swears, and that inconsiderately and falsely, "by the Heaven, or by the Earth, or by any other Oath," how culpable soever to Blame and Punishment, will surely fall into greater Condemnation.

"Above all things take the Shield of Faith." — "Above all things have fervent Charity among yourselves?" &c. — We need not [illegible] the Graces and Virtues of our Religion in Comparison with each other; nor is it necessary to weigh the Vices in so exact a Balance, to distinguish best, when we are possessed of all Good, and as generally avoid all Evil.

(*) In the 2d Chapter of James, verse 10.

Oaths, (we have already seen,) were not only by the Law of Nature tollerated, and practised among the Heathens, (i.e) among those who had no divine Revelation to conduct them; but afterwards were also, under the expreſs Command of God, required among Men. — But,

As all things are liable to Abuſe, and few things in Religion have eſcaped it, great Abuſes in the Matter of Oaths prevailed alſo among the Jews before our Saviour's Days, and which he hath fully & wiſely refuted (*).

Conſidering, then, the Advantages of Oaths, on one Side; and the Jewiſh Perverſion of them, on the other: which is moſt likely to ſuppoſe that our bleſſed Lord intended to forbid, the total Uſe of them, or the Abuſe only?

Is it credible in the leaſt, that He, "whoſe Kingdom is not of this World", ſhould mean to deſtroy the ſureſt Means of the Security of it, and which they had enjoyed from the Beginning.

Certainly this was not his Intention, if his Words can poſſibly ſignify any thing elſe, which they very naturally do.

It is true, indeed, the Prohibition is, at firſt View, abſolute and general; but ſo are many others in Scripture, which yet have their Limitations in the

(*) In the 23d Chapter of St. Matthew.

Nature

As we must understand our Saviour, in these Places, to speak only of needless Thought, and rash Judgment: why should we not understand him to speak here also of needless and rash Swearing, and apprehend, that He chose such large and comprehensive Terms on all these Subjects, because there was much Occasion to warn Men strongly, and in Comparison, but little Danger of their failing to make proper Exceptions.

When our Saviour condemns, the Words immediately following, joined with it, as they ought to be plainly declared. Swear not at all, but let your Communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay.

Communication here, as elsewhere, means Discourse in general. — Oaths, therefore, in common Conversation, is what our blessed Lord here forbids, and not that Bond of Security, which all Nations revere.

A further Confirmation of this, if there needs any, follows it; in which he adds, "For whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil." It proceeds from the Evil one, and consequently from an evil Mind; it produces an evil Custom, is of an evil Example, and ends in Evil.

Common Swearing, indeed, may be called only of evil. But, taking a solemn Oath, on Affairs of Moment, may come, and often doth, from a Reverence of our Maker, and from a Desire of maintaining good Order, Peace, and Justice among Men; all which are the Occasions of great Good.

Our Saviour's Words, then, sufficiently explain themselves.

It is not the mere Sound of a Word, therefore, that we can rely on for the Knowledge of what the Scripture teaches in any Case. The Nature of the Subject, the Scope of the Writer, the Lights offered from other Parts of Scripture, (*) and from Reason also, deserve all to be attended to. So that the true Interpretation of a Passage is sometimes very different from that which may be first suggested to an hasty, heedless Hearer.

The

(*) We see this remarkably exemplified in the Case of our Saviour, in his Temptation in the Wilderness with the Devil; where we find he opposeth Scripture to Scripture to direct him in his Duty, and by it he overcomes his Adversary's Suggestions. See the fourth Chapter of St. Matthew.

The Use of Oaths is not prohibited in the Third Commandment: The Name of the Lord cannot be said to be taken in vain, when it is used in the Support of TRUTH, upon Occasions of IMPORTANCE. — And,

It is very material to observe further, that the more serious and strict of the Jewish Teachers themselves forbad swearing in the same general Terms with our Saviour, though, at the same Time, according to their Law, they exacted Oaths in Matters of Importance. (*) In

(*) *Isocrates*, the Philosopher, counsels Men, "Some (says he,) advise Men to be careful to swear the Truth; but I advise principally that Men do not easily swear at all," (i.e) upon any slight, but only upon weighty Occasions. To the same Purpose *Epictetus*, "Shun Oaths wholly, if it be possible; if not, however as much as you can." And to likewise *Simplicius* in his Comment upon him; "We ought wholly to shun swearing, except upon Occasions of great Necessity." And *Rutilius* among the *Romans*, "To swear at all, except where it is necessary, does not well suit with a wise Man."

Maimonides, from the ancient *Rabbies*, gives this Rule, that "It is best not to swear at all," and *Philo* useth almost the same Words. And *Rabbi Jonathan* comes very near our Saviour's Expression: "The just Man (says he,) will not swear at all, not so much as by the common Names of God, nor by his Attributes, nor by his Works, as by Heaven, or the Angels, or by the Law." — Now,

It is not imaginable, that these learned Jews should condemn Oaths in all Cases, when the Law of Moses in many Cases expressly requires them; and therefore they are to be understood of voluntary Oaths in common Conversation. — And,

In short, therefore, their Words, & our Saviour's, were meant and taken in exactly the same Manner as our's are at present, when we, at any Time, command those under us never to swear. — But,

We have still further Evidence that some Oaths remained after our Saviour's Prohibition, as lawful as before.

That the Jews meant *this* by not swearing at all seems to be very plain from a Passage in *Josephus*, who says that the Sect of the *Essæ* forbad their Disciples to swear at all; and yet he tells us at the same Time, that "they who were admitted into that Sect, took an Oath to observe the Laws and Rules of it." So that they who forbad to swear at all, allowed of Oaths, imposed by the Authority of Superiors.

The Heathens are strong to the same Purpose.

Isocrates *Jusjurandum oblatum duabus de Causis Fide firmandum esse suadebat; vel teipsum ut a turpi Suspicione liberes; vel ut Amicos e magnis Periculis eripias: Pecuniarum verò Gratiâ, etsi justam Causam habeas, non per Deos jurandum dicebat.*

Ut Medicamenta non adhibemus, nisi cum Corpus malè sanum postulat; ita, nec adhibendum est Juramentum, nisi cum Res necessaria ac ponderosa postulant. Jurare, nisi ubi necesse est, gravi Viro parùm convenit.

Certainly, in trifling Matters, such Reverence is due to the Holy Name of God, that Swearing ought to be avoided; but when it is necessary, it ought to be undertaken with those Regards, that are due to the Great God, who is appealed to; a Gravity of Deportment, and an Exactness in weighing the Truth of what we say, are highly necessary here. Certainly our Words ought to be few, and our Hearts full of the Apprehensions of the Majesty of that God with whom we have to do, before whom we stand, and to whom we appeal, "who knoweth all things, and who will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Christ himself (as already observed,) our Faultless Pattern, made use of them; when being adjured by the High-Priest, (which was the Form of Oaths among the Jews *) He answered in direct Terms to it: "Thou hast said;" which Words are not an avoiding to answer, (as some have thought,) but a direct Answer, as if He had said, "It is as thou sayest; and so it is even so; I am the Son of God." For upon this Answer the High-Priest said "He hath spoken Blasphemy." But, To put the Matter beyond all Doubt, St. Mark tells us, that He, being asked by the High-Priest, "Art thou the Son of the Blessed?" He answered, "I am."

So that unless we will interpret our Saviour's Doctrine contrary to his own Practice, we cannot understand him as forbidding all Oaths in general, and when truly required, and consequently they are not unlawful. — But,

Lastly, any one should alledge, (though without a Shadow of Reason,) that our Saviour might exempt himself from what He bound his Disciples to, we observe further,

That One of the most eminent of them, St. Paul, hath, in several of his Epistles, made use of one Term or other of swearing on Occasions which he

law

(*) See Page 41. with the Note.

saw were proper: As, "God is my Witness," "I call God for a Record upon my Soul;" "These things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not." (*)

Thus the Apostle Paul, we see, makes use of Oaths, both in Effect and in very express Terms; not indeed "by Heaven, nor by the Earth," nor by any other such like Oaths he seeks no such vain Subterfuges against Profaneness or Perjury; but swears as he lived, "in Simplicity, and godly Sincerity, by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," than which a more awful Name is not to be uttered by the Voice of Man.

To all which I shall only add, that the same Apostle expressly saith, "Men verily swear by the Greater, and an Oath for Confirmation is to them an End of all Strife." Where he doth not only approve of taking Oaths, or swearing, upon lawful Occasions, but acquaints us also with the great End and necessary Use of them, even "to put an End to all Strife;" This being the greatest Remedy that ever was, or can be found for the determining of Controversies. For, — By swearing we call the Omniscient and Most High to vouch the Truth of what we say; and, if false, to punish us accordingly. — Now,

Is it possible, that so great an Apostle should understand

(*) *Sic Fidem affirmat jurisjurandi suam.*

derſtand ſo little, as obſerve ſo ill, the Rules of that Goſpel which he had received from Chriſt himſelf by Revelation, and was authoriſed, by extraordinary Commiſſion of Apoſtleſhip, to teach, as both to do himſelf, and oblige others to do, what Chriſt had forbidden, and even be guilty of it in thoſe very Writings which make a Part of God's Word? — Or, Is not his Practice in theſe Circumſtances an abundantly ſufficient Commentary on our Saviour's Doctrine?

What the Practice of Chriſtians in the two ſucceeding Ages was, is neither ſo material, nor certain. If they were ſeldom willing to ſwear before HEATHEN Magiſtrates, 'tis probable it was becauſe THEN they muſt have ſworn by HEATHEN Gods (*) But, — As ſoon as even Chriſtianity was eſtabliſhed, Magiſtrates required this Security, and Subjects gave it, as freely as among the Jews before. (†)

(*) It is worſe, (and indeed not a Jot below Blaſphemy,) to ſwear by any other than the true God; for in ſo doing we attribute to a Creature the ſovereign and incommunicable Property of God; we do, (as it were,) ſet that Creature in the very Throne of God, and inveſt him with the Regalities of his Omniſcience to know our Hearts, and with Almighty Power to avenge the Wrong upon us done to him, as well as to Men, by falſe ſwearings.

(†) *Athanaſius*, being accuſed by *Caſſianus*, purged himſelf by an Oath, and deſired that his Accuſer might be put to his Oath, — by calling the TRUTH to witneſs, by which Form (ſays he) we Chriſtians are wont to ſwear." Serm. CXXI.

All these Considerations as they unite in shewing, that the Words of our Saviour relate only to swearing without Necessity in common Conversation; so are they Authorities beyond Exception, justifying the Use of an Oath upon a great Occasion, and before a competent Authority. (*) — Indeed,

Were there much less to favour this Limitation; yet, while the State of the World continues such as it is, if Questions of Importance arise, (as they often do,) which cannot be decided as they ought without our Testimony, and the which will not be accepted except upon Oath, what is here to be done?

Shall we stand by, and see Falsehood and Oppression triumph, and the Lives and Fortunes of Men unjustly depressed, rather than do what is confessedly lawful to prevent it?

Ought we not, in such a Case, to follow the Direction "I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice," thereby preferring the moral and unchangeable Duty of supporting Truth and Right before the positive and mutable One, (if any such there were,) of abstaining from an Oath. — In a Word,

That which serves to such excellent Purposes, and is so convenient for human Society, and for mutual Security and Confidence among Men, ought not

(*) See the 39th Article of Religion.

not easie to be presumed unlawful, till it is very plain it be proved to be so (*). And if we consider the Nature of an Oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the least Appearance of Evil in it. There is surely no Evil in it, as it is an Act of Religion, nor as it is an Appeal to God as a Witness & Avenger in Case we swear falsely, not as it is a Confirmation of a doubtful Matter, not as it puts an End to Strife and Controversy. These are all the essential Ingredients of an Oath, and the Ends of it; and they are all so good, that they rather commend it, than give the least Colour of Ground to condemn it.

As to Oaths not imposed by the Magistrate, their Case is very different; as we ought to be extremely cautious about them.

Our Saviour's Prohibition, (as we have seen,) is only of swearing in common Discourse; and what we

(*) It is a very strong Inducement to believe the Lawfulness of Oaths, from the unavoidable Condition of human Affairs, which have made them so necessary. The Apostle tells us, "that an Oath is not only of great Use in human Affairs, but in many Cases of great Necessity, to confirm doubtful things, and to put an End to Controversies which cannot be otherwise decided to the Satisfaction of the Parties contending." An Oath, for Confirmation, is to them an "End of all Strife;" and indeed, it is hardly imaginable that God should not have left That lawful, which is so evidently necessary to the Peace and Security of Mankind.

as deliberately affert on Occafions of more than ordinary Moment; it is of a Nature very fuperior to this; for which Reafon, and efpecially fince our Saviour and his Apoftles did on fuch Occafions make ufe of thefe Affeverations, it is not always unlawful for us to do. — But,

If, in Imitation of the preceeding Examples, efpecially that of the Supreme Being himfelf, and in Oppofition, (as we think,) to none of his Commands, in Cafes of Importance, for the Sake of Truth, in Support of Juftice, at the Call of Charity, we engage our Religion as well as Honour, and fubmit to be bound by this accumulated Obligation; let us not forget to imitate the fame perfect Pattern in that Frugality alſo and Truth, which may render the Aſſiſtance of Oaths as little neceſſary as poſſible.

This, at leaſt, we may do ſafely, without Danger either of offending God, or incurring Cenſure from any Sect of Chriſtians whatever. — Whether it be lawful to ſwear, or not, it is certainly a Duty to ſpeak Truth, and to act honeſtly.

The Controverſy concerning Oaths would come to a very deſireable End, if all Parties would but draw this Concluſion from it. However we may differ from thoſe who ſcruple the Uſe of Oaths, we

must agree with this Principle, that the most certain and most acceptable Way of gaining Credit is via ways to speak Truth. And, if they be careful to give us this Security to rely upon, we have not much Reason to complain of the Exchange. Their Practice will be the best Vindication of their Professions. Tho we do right, on our Part, to be fully persuaded in our own Mind, we may well permit Them to plead Conscience, who can give the most inviolable Fidelity for a Proof of their Conscientiousness. Let them freely enjoy any Dispensation or Privilege, so long as they never use it for a Cloak of Maliciousness, or "as a Means to deceive."(b)

It is certainly most expedient, as well as prudent, absolutely to avoid Oaths, whenever we possibly can, and most Men may avoid them entirely. It happens exceedingly seldom, and to very few of us, that our Sincerity cannot be evidenced, if we will, by other Methods than by that of Oaths, and which will appear abundantly more worthy of Credit, without the awful Solemnity of an Appeal to God, which ought to be sacredly reserved for Emergencies of uncommon Necessity. — Indeed Persons

(b) Where People are honest, Oaths are unnecessary — "But who knoweth the Heart of a Man, but the Spirit of a Man that is in him?"

Persons of all Perſuaſions on this Subject, or on any other, may do well to reflect, that God is Witneſs of every thing. Whether we invoke him or not, ſtill he is preſent. The we cautiouſly decline the Uſe of his Holy Name, & ſubſtitute ſome other Object of leſs Veneration in his Place; or if we ſtrive with him by Mental Reſervations, or by putting to Words a Senſe of our own different from that which is acknowledged and underſtood; or if we refuſe to ſwear at all from pretended Scruples; all theſe evaſive Expedients will be found inſufficient to ſcreen our Inſincerity from Reſentment. For Falſehood, as well as Perjury, is certainly offenſive to God. "Lying Lips are an Abomination to the Lord." — Upon the Whole,

To ſwear by the Name of God, upon juſt and weighty Occaſions, with Reverence and in Truth, is ſo far from being a Crime, when we are called to it by lawful Authority, that we ſhould very often offend, both againſt Juſtice & Charity, if we ſhould refuſe it. — And, it is in vain to alledge, to the contrary, a Zeal and Tenderneſs for the Honour of Gods Name, ſince God hath ſo far approved of it, that He hath ſometimes uſed it himſelf, & we have the Example of his more peculiar Favourites to juſtify the Practice of it; and holy David ſpeaks of it

not

The free Course of Justice is owing, in a great Measure, to the Obligation of those Oaths with which Princes and Magistrates bind themselves to a diligent and impartial Administration of it; hence it is that the Fatherless and Widows are defended in their just Rights against those who would otherwise defraud and oppress them: the Violence of wicked Men is by this Means restrained, their Hands stretched, and themselves brought to condign Punishment; and were there no better Arguments wherewith for the Lawfulness of Oaths, yet, considering how happy an Instrument they are of the greatest Benefit to Mankind, how necessary for the Support of Justice, and the Preservation of Peace and good Order in Societies, we can hardly suppose but that they are allowed by God, and were indeed of His own Ordering and Appointment, "from whom every good thing cometh," being at the same Time the most certain Pledges, as well as the utmost Assurances which we can possibly give of our Faith and Sincerity; and are therefore both the Sinews of Government, and most sacred Bonds of Security, as in a solemn Appeal to God as a Wit-

nels of the Truth of what we say: To God, from whose piercing and all-seeing Eye, from whose perfect and infinite Knowledge, nothing is, or can be hid; so that there is not a Thought in our Hearts, but he sees it; nor a Word in our Tongue, but he discerns the Truth or Falsehood of it. Whenever we swear, we appeal to his Knowledge, and refer ourselves to his just Judgement, who is the powerful Patron & Protector of Right, and the almighty Judge and Avenger of all Falsehood and Unrighteousness. So that it is not possible for Men to lay a more sacred or solemn Obligation upon their Consciences to speak Truth, than by the Religion and Sanctity of an Oath. Moses very well expresseth it by "binding our Souls with a Bond," (*) intimating that he that swears, lays the strongest Obligation upon himself, and puts his Soul in Pledge for the Truth of what he says. And this Obligation no Man can violate, but at the utmost Peril of the Judgment and Vengeance of God.

Thus have I endeavoured to lay before you, how far Oaths are lawful, with the sacred Nature and Obligation of them: And, the Subject is material enough to be thus enlarged on, were it only for the THREE following Reasons, [viz.]

1st. That Christianity may not lie under the Im-

(*) Numb. xxx. 2. putation

2dly, That the whole Body of its Profeſſors may not be accuſed of authorizing the Tranſgreſſions of one of its fundamental Precepts: — And,

3dly, That none of us in particular, if at any Time called upon to give our Teſtimony in a legal Manner, may do it with a doubtful Conſcience; for "whatſoever is not of Faith, is Sin."

There is yet One more and a very ſerious Uſe to be made of the Doctrine before us, [viz.]

That if the Bond of an Oath, on fit Occaſions, be of ſuch Importance to Society, and ſince an awful Regard to God is what gives to all Oaths their whole Force and Efficacy, that Regard ſhould be cultivated with the utmoſt Care.

When the Dread of an Almighty Avenger is taken away, the moſt ſacred of Obligations will become no better than a more effectual Means of committing Injuſtice. (*)

Let

(*) The Neceſſity of Religion to the Support of human Society, in nothing appears more evidently than in this, that the Obligation of an Oath, which is ſo neceſſary for the Maintenance of Peace & Juſtice among Men, depends wholly upon the Senſe and Belief of a God. See Wiſdom xiv. 27, &c. to the End. Serm. CXXI.

(therefore diligently preserve) the Reverence of God strong upon our Hearts, and on those about us; "the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom; a good Understanding have all they that do thereafter; the Praise of it endureth forever."

Sermon

SERMON CXXII.

Against False-witness, or Perjury, the Abuse of proper Oaths.

Matt. v. 33. "Thou shalt not forswear thyself."

Having already shown that Oaths, imposed by the Authority we are, and may lawfully be complied with, I shall here endeavour to persuade to the performing them "in Truth, in Judgment, and Righteousness," from the Sin of the contrary Practice of False-swearing and Perjury in particular, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself." — In speaking on this Vice, I shall,

First, shew when, and by what Ways, Men may become guilty of it. — And then,

II. Its Guilt and Heinousness against God; with the Injustice and Perfidy of it before Men.

Concluding with such Considerations as may naturally dissuade from it. — And first,

Before we shew the aggravating Nature of this Sin, it is fit to know by what Ways Men become guilty of it.

To "FORSWEAR ourselves," is to be guilty of False witness in any Respect, whether in our more publick Courts of Judicature, or in our extrajudicial Testimonies among one another; and is equal to the Breach of the NINTH Commandment, given by God to suppress all Tendencies to it. (*)

When a Man asserts upon Oath what he knows to be otherwise: or promises what he does not intend to perform: in both these Cases the very Act of Swearing is Perjury. — But,

The Crime here principally and most expressly meant to be pointed at, is, giving false Evidence in any Cause of Trial. And as, in such Cases, Evidence hath always been given upon Oath, This Matter therefore requires our most peculiar Regard and Attention. — Now,

We are guilty of this Sin, if in bearing Witness, we affirm that we know or believe any thing, which really we do not; or deny that we know or believe any

(*) To bear witness, in its *primary* Sense, is a judicial Term, importing That Testimony which is given only in Courts of Judicature, for the Decision of Controversies, between Man and Man, especially in Matters of capital or high Concernment. — But,

In a *secondary* Sense, it is as often used to import even all extrajudicial Testimonies, which are Reports and Significations among Men, in Matters trivial, or of more common Concernment.

The Falsity of which, in both Cases, consists in a Controversy to the inward Sense of the Mind, and certain Knowledge of the thing

any thing which we really do: It is deliberately affirming Matters to be what we know, or believe they really are, on Purpose to deceive; either to the Damage of the Life, Hurt of the Estate, or Prejudice of the Reputation of another; and is the highest & most enormous Degree of the Sin before us; and is a Wickedness of so high a Nature, and in which it is so impossible for any Man's Conscience to be deceived; that no Man can be guilty of it in any Case, who has, or even the least Pretence to, or Appearance of Religion. Indeed,

If we either affirm or deny more positively than we have just Grounds for so doing (*), or,

If we only stifle, by our Silence, any Fact, which is material which we are not examined particularly about in a Court of Justice, when we have sworn in general to speak the whole Truth, we then are false witnesses, as

we

(*) When a Man is uncertain whether what he says to be true, This is Perjury in the Act, tho not of the same Degree of Guilt with the former; because it is not so fully and directly against his Knowledge and Conscience. For Men ought to be certain of the Truth of what they assert upon Oath, and not to swear at a Venture. And therefore no Man ought positively to swear to the Truth of any things but what He himself hath seen or heard. This being the highest Assurance Men are capable of in this World. In like Manner he is guilty of Perjury in the same Degree, who promises upon Oath, what he is not morally and reasonably certain he shall be able to perform.

we designedly avoid it; especially, after being asked, if we are able to say any thing besides, relative to the Point in Question. For,

Hiding the Truth may as totally mislead those who are to judge, as telling an Untruth. (*) Indeed, If by any Means whatever we disguise the real State of the Case, instead of relating it in the fairest and plainest Manner we can; we evidently transgress in the Case before us. Therefore,

Besides what hath been advanced, They are likewise guilty of Perjury, who swear [illegible] or with Reservation of something in their Minds, (thinking thereby to moderate & qualify the Truth of what they say.)

Nothing can more directly overthrow the great End and Use of Oaths, which are for Confirmation, and to put an End to Strife, than are these things!

For,

(*) When we [illegible] to be true,

[illegible]

Though we are not bound in every Case to speak the whole Truth, yet when a Matter depends in Whole, or in Part, upon our Evidence, we are bound not only to avoid all Falsehood; but also not to omit any thing which may give Light to the true Merits of the Cause: For, such Concealment has the Nature of a Lie, because partial Evidences may have the same evil Effects as those Evidences have, which are directly false. *Occulta nocent, nihil veritati.* The Truth should always appear in Evidence, that Justice may be duly exercised.

For by these Arts a Man's Matter is left in the same Uncertainty it was before, and there is no Decision of it. For there is scarce any Form of Words to be devised so plain, as not to be liable after all, to Equivocation, and secret Reservation of something in our Minds, which will recal the Sense of what-ever we can say or promise by Oath.

This therefore may be laid down for a certain Rule, that all Departure from the Simplicity of an Oath is a Degree of Perjury; and a Man is never a Whit the less forsworn because his Perjury is a little finer and more artificial than ordinary.

We must not therefore think in these Cases, to come off with Equivocations, Evasions, & the like, and imagine it innocent to deceive in this Way. On the contrary, the more artful and cunning our Falsehoods are, the more deliberate & mischievous, and, of Course, the wickeder they are.

Instead therefore of Men's thinking by this Device to save themselves harmless from the Guilt of so great a Sin, they do really increase it, by adding to their Iniquity the impudent Folly of mocking God, and deceiving themselves. (*) — And,

Whereas

(*) Equivocations and mental Reservations in Swearings, are most condemned, and it is against common Honesty and the Reverence that is due to God. Serm. CXXII.

Whereas it is pleaded in the Favour of mental Reservation, that the whole Proposition, as made up of what is expressed in Words, and of that which is reserved in the Mind, is true, a Man may so swear without Danger of Perjury; (*) This is of no Force, because, Tho the whole Proposition be true, it is deceitful, and contrary to that Sincerity which ought to be in an Oath: Add to this, that the End of an Oath is hereby defeated, which is, to ascertain the Truth of what we say: but if a Man reserves something in his Mind, which alters the Truth of what he says, the thing is still as doubtful and uncertain as it was before. — Besides,

If this be a good Reason, a Man may swear with Reservation in all Cases, because the Reason equally extends itself to all; for if the Proposition, as made up of what is expressed in Words and reserved in the Mind, will excuse a Man from Perjury, then no Man can be perjured, that swears with Reservation. If this were allowed, it would destroy all Faith among Men. And therefore, since the Reason extends to ALL Cases alike, it is plain that it is to be allowed in none. — But further, The

(*) For Instance, if a Man, being asked upon Oath whether he be a *Priest*, shall answer He is not, reserving in his Mind that *He is not a Priest of* BACCHUS, or the like. Or being asked whether he heard or saw such or such a thing, shall answer, No; reserving in his Mind, *Not to DAY*.

The Words in Conjunction with the Command given by God in the Case before us, import only that we shall not forswear ourselves, by bearing False-witness against our Neighbour; but the Effect they bind us equally not to forswear ourselves, by bearing False-witness for him.

In all Trials of Property, bearing-witness for one Party, is bearing-witness AGAINST the other.

And, In all Trials for Crimes, false Evidence, to the Advantage of the Person accused, is to the Disadvantage and Overthrow of Rights of publick Safety and Peace, by concealing and encouraging what ought to be detected and punished.

It being thus criminal to bear False-witness (e) in any Respect to "forswear ourselves," it must be criminal also to seduce and draw Persons into the Commission of so great a Sin, by Gifts, or Promises, or

(e) No Interest, or Favour, or Kindness, or Compassion for Others, no Turn or Purpose of whatever Sort can ever justify one swerving at all from Truth, either in giving Evidence, or entering into Engagements, *for*, or *against*, any Man. — In all Cases where either the Administration of publick Justice, or the manifest Benefit and Advantage of private good Christians, requires it; In all These Cases it is Men's Duty to accuse Criminals of all Sorts, and to bear Testimony against them in Righteousness and Truth. — See Vol. VII. Page [illegible] seq. with the Note (z).

In its Degree it must be reckoned almost as bad as the Accusation, or false Action against any one; or to make any sort of Pretence for which there is no reasonable Ground (x) — And, further,

However favourable Persons are apt to think of the Defendent's Side; yet to defend ourselves against Justice, or even to delay it by unfair Methods, is very wicked. For, it ought to take place; and the sooner the better. Yet still, both the Professors of the Law, and Others, may unquestionably lawful do, for a doubtful, or a bad Cause, whatever can be said with Truth, or done with Equity: for otherwise it might be thought still worse than it is, and treated worse than it deserves. — But,

If they do, in any Cause, what in Reason ought not to be done; if they use or suggest indirect Methods of defeating the Intent of the Law; if by false Colours and Glosses, by terrifying & confounding Witnesses, by calumniating or ridiculing the adverse Party, they endeavour to make Justice itself an Instrument for patronizing Injustice; This is turning Judgement into Gall, (as the Scripture expresses

(x) Put not thine Hand with the Wicked to be an unrighteous Witness. *Ne astruendo Homines duci Præmio proximum Latrocinio sit.*

(y) See Deut. xix. 16, &c. CXXII.

[illegible] and the Trade of Righteousness [illegible]
[illegible] being kept pure, might [illegible]
In a still higher Degree is it so, when Judges or Juries are influenced, in giving their Sentence or Verdict, by Interest, Relation, Friendship, Hatred, Compassion, or Party; in a Word, by any thing but the Nature of the Case, as it fairly appears to them. — For,

Designedly making a false Determination is completing all the Mischief, which "forswearing," or [illegible] false, [illegible] only [illegible] and,

In a Word, — Whoever, in any way promotes what is Wrong, or obstructs what is Right, partakes in the same Sin; be he either of the Parties, their Evil Genius or Agents, be it the highest Magistrate or the lowest Officer; — For, the Oath of the Lord is upon them, and they are bound to do what is right. So that in any Way to be aiding hereto, is to be guilty of Perjury, and to become "forsworn."

In every Way, therefore, whether by Ourselves, or Others; whether in our Judicial, or extrajudical Proceedings, let us have a strict Regard to Truth in all things: for, God hath been abundantly careful, by his Word and Command, to exclude all Falsity from forming us, however imposed, that Righteousness and Truth might be established among us: tho'

principally regarding the Fountain, that the Fountain being kept pure, might send it down in full Streams into our Streets, and Peace and Truth, be in all our Ways. — But,

II. Of the Guilt and Heinousness of this Vice before God; and the Injustice and Iniquity of it before Men. — And,

First, Of the Guilt, and Heinousness of it before God. — And here,

The more clearly to manifest this, I shall consider the Nature of an Oath particularly in itself, as it is a most sacred Obligation, being a solemn Appeal to God as a Witness of the Truth of what we say: to God, from whose piercing and all-seeing Eye, from whose perfect and infinite Knowledge, nothing is, or can be hid; so that there is not a Thought in our Heart but He sees it, nor a Word in our Tongue, but He discerns the Truth or Falsehood of it. Taking an Oath is declaring solemnly that we know ourselves to be in the Presence of God, and him to be Witness of what we speak.

Whenever, therefore, we swear, we appeal to his Knowledge, and refer ourselves to his just Judgement; who is the powerful Patron and Protector of Right, and the almighty Judge and Avenger of all Falsehood and Unrighteousness. So

So that it is not possible for Men to lay a more sacred and solemn Obligation upon their Consciences, than by the Religion of an Oath. Moses well expresses it by binding our Souls with a Bond; If a Man swear an Oath, to bind his Soul with a Bond, intimating that he that swears, lays the strongest Obligation upon himself, and pledges his Soul for the Truth of what he says; he appeals to God that his Words express the very Truth of his Heart, and renounces all Title to his Mercy, if they do not. This Obligation therefore no Man can violate, but at the utmost Peril of the just Judgment and Vengeance of God.

This is to swear — and think THEN what it must be to swear falsely! — When a Man solemnly calls God as a Witness to the Truth of That, which he either KNOWS to be False, or does NOT KNOW to be True. This is a Crime of so high a Nature, that no Man can possibly be guilty of it, who has any Sense at all of Religion remaining upon his Mind. For he who knowingly and deliberately calls God to witness a Falsehood, in Order to deceive or wrong another, does openly disclaim the Mercies of God, and challenges the Almighty to show him no Favour. — Indeed,

Every Oath implies a Curse upon ourselves in

Loss of Perjury, according to Plato in Cri. And, This was always the Sense of Mankind concerning the Obligation of Oaths. "Our Forefathers, (saith Tully,) had no stricter Bond, whereby to oblige the Faith of Men, to one another, than that of an Oath." To the same Purpose is That of the Cadmean, "If I knew of any thing more sacred than an Oath, whereby to confirm to you the Truth of what I say, I would make use of it."

An Oath, then, being an Appeal to the Omniscient God of Truth, for the Truth of what we say; and to the Holy and righteous Judge, for Judgement if we are false; what can be of greater Moment, (I want Words to express it,) Both to shew our Obligation to Truth; and the Guilt and Hellishness, and consequently Danger, if we neglect it? (*) — But further,

That Perjury is a most heinous Sin, is evident, because it is contrary to the plain and direct Law and Command of God. "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord, thy God in vain," (lie) Thou shalt not apply the Name of God to a Falsehood: Or, as Josephus renders it, "Thou shalt not adjure God

(*) Perjury is a Crime, for which it is very difficult to obtain Pardon; because, in Swearing, we invoke the Vengeance of God, and renounce his Mercy, in case we swear falsely. "A false Witness shall not be unpunished; and he that speaketh Lies shall perish."

God to a false thing;" which our Blessed Saviour (in the Words before us) renders yet more plainly, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself." So He seems to refer to the 2nd Commandment when He says, "ye have heard that it was said to them of Old Time, thou shalt not forswear thyself," as he had done before, at the 6th and 7th, when he says, "It was said to them of Old Time, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit Adultery." So that the primary, if not the sole Intention of This Law, "thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in VAIN;" is to forbid the great Sin of Perjury, nor does it appear in Scripture that the Phrase of "taking God's Name in vain," is used in any other Sense. Thus it is certainly used in Prov. "Lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in VAIN;" (i.e) lest Poverty should tempt me to steal, and Stealth should engage me in Perjury. For among the Jews, an Oath was tendered to him that was suspected of Theft, as appears from Levit. (vi. 2.) where it is said "If any One be guilty of Theft, and lie concerning it, or sweareth falsely; he shall restore all that about which he hath sworn falsely." "Lest I steal, and take the Name of the Lord my God in VAIN;" (i.e) be perjured, being examined upon Oath concerning

a thing stolen. Doubtless therefore, for this Reason the Thief and the Perjured Person are put together [viz.] "A Curse shall enter into the House of the Thief, and of him that sweareth falsely by the Name of God."

From all which it is very probable, that the whole Intention of the third Commandment is to forbid this great Sin of Perjury. To deter Men from which, a severe Threatning is there added; "for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain." And,

It is very observable, that there is no threatning added to any other Commandment, but to This and the Second; intimating to us that, next to Idolatry, and the Worship of a false God, Perjury is one of the greatest Affronts that can be offered to the Divine Majesty.

I need not use many Words to aggravate this Sin; it is certainly a Crime of the highest Nature. Deliberate Perjury being directly against a Man's Knowledge, so that no Man can be guilty of it without an immediate Affront to his Conscience and his own Judgment, which is one of the greatest Aggravations of any Crime. It's complicated Guilt and Magnitude is scarce to be paralleled. It is an horrible Abuse of the Name of God; It is an open

Contempt of his Judgments, and an insolent Defiance of his Vengeance. It is calling the God of Truth to bear witness to a Falsehood; it is provoking the Almighty, as far as we can, in the Defence and Assertion of that, which He, above all things, abhors; than which there cannot be a more dangerous and provoking Affront. It argues a Person to be of the most abandoned and desperate Principles. It shews either rank Infidelity, or the most daring Presumption.

Solomon, therefore, did not without Reason take notice of This, as one of the seven things, which is an Abomination to the Lord [viz] A false Witness that speaketh Lies.

A Man, before he can be guilty of this, must either think wickedly, that there is no God; or else, if there is, that he is such a One as himself, false & deceitful, or an Encourager and Protector of those who are so: or, he must think yet more absurdly, that God is a Being not to be feared or regarded, how highly soever we provoke and affront him.

This implies the very Height of Wickedness, and expresses such an Audaciousness to, and Contempt of the Supreme Being, as cannot otherwise be expressed.

To tell a Lye to the Face of Omnipotence and

Truth; and to call upon God to observe it, and to be a Witness to his own Dishonour, and our daring Impiety, is a Sin, beyond Expression, GREAT.

The Guilt of other Sins generally makes Men bashful and shy, and to use all the little Artifices they can to hide their Transgressions from God and the World; at least to stifle & suppress the Thoughts of a Divine Presence, to forget that God is near, and beholds them. — But,

The False-swearer, without Fear or Shame, rushes into the Presence of God; and with the most consummate Impudence affronts his Majesty, renounces his Mercy, puts him to Defiance, and (as it were) bids him to take-notice of the Falsehood, and do his WORST.

It is no Marvel, then, that this Sin cries so loud to Heaven, and quickens the Pace of God's Judgements; "I will come near to you in Judgement, and be a swift Witness against the Swearer."

For this, God, (by his Prophet) threatens utter Destruction to the Man and his House; "I will bring forth the Curse, saith God, and it shall enter into the House of him that sweareth falsely by the Name of God; and it shall remain in the midst of his House, and shall consume it, with the Timber thereof, and the Stones thereof. It shall remain in the

the midst of his House, and shall consume it."

This Sin by the secret Judgment of God undermines Estates and Families, to the Ruin of Both. And

Among the Heathens it was always reckoned one of the greatest Crimes, & which they believed God did not only punish upon the guilty Person himself, but upon his Family and Posterity, and many Times upon whole Nations, as the Prophet also tells us,

"Because of Oaths the Land mourneth."

The Man, then, who, through brutal Confidence, adventures on a false Oath, commits a very great Sin, which therefore can only be expiated by a very deep and severe Repentance, or it will bring down heavy Judgments on those who are guilty of it.

Such is the blasphemous, provoking, and dangerous Nature of Perjury with Respect to God.

Its Hurtfulness to Men is as fully evident. It is equally a Sin against both Tables of the Law; as it is the highest Affront to God, so is it of the most injurious Consequence to Men. — Indeed,

The NINTH Commandment, which (as we have seen, is particularly levelled against this Sin) is connected with every one of the rest, which precede it; for neither the Duties of Superiors, or Inferiors,

nor those amongst Equals, could be duly practised; neither the Lives of Men, nor their Happiness in the nearest Relations of Life, nor their Possessions and Properties could ever be secure, if they were less exposed to the Injuries of a false Tongue, which are here prohibited.

It requires no Depth of Thought to describe, or Strength of Memory to recollect its pernicious Nature and Effects.

Men, by this, may become guilty of almost every Crime that can be mentioned: By this we may take away a Man's Life, which is Murder; or his Estate, which is Robbery: Indeed, the Life of the Innocent, and the Property of the Secure have been sacrificed hereto; & an ignominious Death hath been the Fate of the One; and Indigence and Misery, the hard Fortune of the Other. But,

The False-swearer is not only injurious, and an Enemy to particular Persons; but to Society in general; whose Advantages are hereby defeated, indeed, turned into Mischiefs, and the very Bonds of it dissolved; subverting, at once, the Foundations of public Peace and Justice, with the private Security of every Man's Life & Fortune. It is a defeating of the best and last Way that the Wisdom of Men could devise, and the Command of God hath

enjoined,

enjoined, for the Decision of doubtful Matters.

Solomon very fully and elegantly expresses the destructive Nature of this Sin: "A False-witness against his Neighbour is a Maul, and a Sword, and a sharp Arrow;" intimating probably, that amongst all the Instruments of Cruelty, Mischief, and Ruin, which have been ever devised by Man, none is of more pernicious Consequence to Society, than Perjury and Breach of Faith. It is a Pestilence that walketh in Darkness," a secret Stab, against which, many Times, there is no Possibility of Defence. It is Sin both against divine and human Faith, it impiously appears to brave Heaven itself, and is odious to all Societies on Earth, slighting all solemn Covenants made with God and Man.

The Considerations to be adduced against the Vice before us, are such as naturally result from what hath been already said. As,

First, From the Nature of an Oath, we see the great Weight and Importance of it: in whatever light we view it, whether as an Appeal to God, or as preserving the Rights, the Lives, and Liberties of Men, nothing can be of greater Force to impress the strictest Truth in us, than are these things.

What can be more solemn than an Appeal to

God! to the God of Truth! and "who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity," much less to espouse, countenance, and confirm it; and "whose Wisdom runneth from one End to another swiftly," & therefore from whose Knowledge nothing can escape!

Tho we may affert Falsehoods, and by Oath attest and confirm them before Men undiscovered, yet we cannot be so before God; for "all the Ways of the Children of Men are naked & open before Him with whom we have to do;" and He knoweth not only our open Acts, but also our secret Minds and Purposes, what they are, whether true or false.

It is therefore an awful Consideration to have the Great God of Heaven and Earth, thus privy to, and present with us. Even in our common Conversation and ordinary Course of Life, we are always before him, how much more then in our immediate & solemn Appeals to him? And if in the former, "He is a God that executeth Judgment against all Unrighteousness and Ungodliness of Men," surely we may well suppose (as by his Prophet He hath solemnly declared), "He will be a swift Witness against all perjured Offenders." However therefore God may bear with them for a while, they shall not finally go unpunished.

With

With Respect to this Vice, between Man & Man, the Rule of the Mosaic Law is express: "A false Witness rise up against any Man, and testify against his Brother that which is wrong; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his Brother, and thine Eye shall not pity."

His Punishment hath been Death. (*) but the most natural and equitable Punishment, (which also appears to have been inflicted in some (†) Nations, and in the (‡) Roman Government at a certain Period,) is that which the Law of Moses prescribes, (as just mentioned.) — And,

Were it not a Matter of extreme Difficulty to pronounce concerning the Utility of Laws, without the Experience of them; One would think, that, as the severest Punishment of wilful false Testimony would be no more than just; so it would be the most likely to advance the Cause of Truth and Justice, and the Happiness of every Nation in the World. For,

The Crime surely, (as we have seen,) is of the deepest

(*) *Ut qui falsum Testimonium dixisset, a saxo Tarpeio dejiceretur.* XII. Tab.

(†) Diod. Sic. Lib. 1. — Οι δε Λακεδαιμονιοι τους ψευδομαρτυρας κατακριναντες θανατου, ὡς τους ολεθριωτατους ἐλεγχους.

(‡) *Cum Calumniantes ad Vindictam poscat* Similitudo *Supplicii.*

Serm. CXXII. C. 9. 2. 17.

deepest Dye, as wicked and hurtful as can well be committed: Indeed, it is not eaſy to imagine a greater Degree of Depravity, than accompanies the Commiſſion of this Offence, of a Complication of more grievous Sins, than are comprehended in it.

For, to paſs by the Perjury, which belongs to this Offence but by Accident, & has been already mentioned; it is (as we have ſeen,) MURDER or ROBBERY, (as the Caſe may happen to be;) and that more grievous, than if done by open Violence, as loading the Innocent with Diſgrace and Infamy.

It is a Violation of TRUTH. And this ſurely is no ſmall Part of every Crime into which it enters. An Act of Injuſtice and Cruelty, when it is joined with Treachery, or brought about by Falſehood & Fraud, is doubly deteſtible, and raiſes our Indignation to the higheſt Degree. — Again,

False Teſtimony is peculiarly injurious to SOCIETY. The immediate Object of the Crime is far from being the only Sufferer: the State itſelf is hurt; and that not merely by the Loſs of a ſingle Member, if that be the Conſequence; but it receives, as it were, a Wound in its vital Parts. For the Adminiſtration of Public Juſtice, is the very Life of civil Society: Its Being depends upon it: if This be deſtroyed, we fall back immediately into a State of Nature. — Now,

False

False Testimony in every Instance, interrupts the Administration of Justice; it would stop it entirely, were it universally prevalent. A Judge cannot see every thing with his own Eyes, he can only execute the Laws, by giving Credit to the Witnesses. Truth, therefore, and civil Society must expire together. — Again,

Solemn false Testimony is an Offence, that must always be premeditated. It is not an Effect of any sudden Transport or Gust of Passions, but shows a Temper resolutely corrupt, and hardened in Wickedness. (These things we have already displayed.) — But,

What Need is there to paint this hateful Offence thro all its Aggravations? It requires a Degree of Impudence, and Meanness, a Strength of Forehead, and Baseness of Heart, that can only belong to the very worst, the vilest, or most abandoned Character: So that if some other Crimes were as pernicious as this, yet hardly could any be so odious. A bold Usurper, a bloody Tyrant, is advanced, no Doubt, to an high Pitch of Wickedness: yet he is even able to inspire us with some Degree of Reverence for his Authority or Accomplishments, and force us to mix Respect with our Abhorrence of him. But his Spies and his Sycophants (the Tools with which he works,

and who are so ready ever to testify what it is convenient for him to have believed, (tho' it is not always believed,) these are yet more execrable: the two Extremities of Aversion are united in our Sentiments of them; and they are, at the same Time, the most terrible, and most contemptible.

It may justly be questioned whether the Number of Oaths, (*) and the careless, inattentive Manner in which they are administered, (‡) do not contribute to Perjury. — But, However

(*) One of the most striking Circumstances attending the Oaths of this Country, is their *enormous Multitude*. They are administered to every Class of People, and on every trivial Occasion. This naturally has the worst Effects on their Minds; for it is impossible that Men, who are obliged to take Oaths on every trifling Occasion, should have much Sense of the Obligation imposed by them.

For the Truth of This, we may appeal to the Experience of every Man, whether, in Proportion to the Number of Oaths he has taken, his Sense of their awful Obligation has not gradually diminished?

See Reflections on Oaths. London, printed for J. Debrett, Piccadilly, 1781. In which it is proved that the Oaths of this Kingdom are infinitely more numerous than is necessary for the Support of Government; that so far from being of Benefit to Religion, they have rooted out of the Minds of the Generality of People, all Sense of religious Obligation.

(‡) Another ill Consequence attending the Frequency of Oaths, is the *careless Manner* in which they are administered. Were it a Business of the most trifling Nature, it could hardly seem to excite less Attention

Oaths

However this be, let all Offenders herein, all false Swearers, know assuredly, that no Deficiencies can atone for their Breach of Duty: & that how light soever their Punishment may be in this World, it will be sufficiently heavy in the next.

"Be not deceived, God is not mocked; He will deal with every Man according to his Works; and mighty Transgressors shall be mightily tormented."

The Oaths are no longer a Security to Government, than the Person who takes them, retains a Sense of the Obligation they impose upon him. Whenever, therefore, by any improper Application, or Misuse of them, that Sense is eradicated from the Minds of the Generality of People, Government and the Publick evidently lose That Security, which they were designed to ensure.

A Remedy to this Evil is absolutely necessary, which may easily be applied by diminishing the Number of Oaths, by abrogating all obscure, improper, and unnecessary Ones, and never exacting any, but in the most urgent Necessity, and always administring them in the most solemn Manner.

A great and skilful Magistrate hath spoke thus upon the Subject:

"When I mention the Word, OATH, where shall I find Language sufficient to express the hearty Concern I feel, when I consider with what shameful Insensibility this great Defence of our Lives, this Barrier of our Liberties, this Security of our Properties, an OATH, is treated by the lower Rank of the Community! I too much fear that One of the principal Causes of this Contempt, is the *slovenly Manner* in which this solemn Obligation is administered: which does not only take-off the Awe, but even the very Idea of the Presence of Almighty God."

After such a Declaration, we cannot but believe that This Magistrate was more than ordinary careful and solemn in his Manner of administring Oaths. Serm. CXXII.

The following are the Declarations of God's sacred Word to the upright Man:

"Lord, who shall dwell in thy Tabernacle, or who shall rest upon thy Holy Hill?" to which the Answer is, "He that speaketh the Truth from his Heart, and hath used no Deceit in his Tongue: He that sweareth unto his Neighbour, and disappointeth him not, tho it were to his own Hindrance."

But to the perjured: - "Seeing he hath despised the Oath, by breaking the Covenant; thus saith the Lord God: As I live, surely mine Oath that he hath despised, and my Covenant that he hath broken, I will recompence it upon his Head: he shall by no Means be held guiltless:". "a Curse shall enter into his House, by the Name of God."

"There is a Word, then, cloathed about with Death; God grant that it be not found in the Heritage of Jacob, for all such things will be far from the godly."

Sermon

SERMON CXXIII.

Against Common-Swearing.

Matt. v. 34. "Swear not at all."

These Words, as they cannot, (agreeably with the Context and Reason of the thing,) be interpreted as forbidding the Use of all Oaths on just Occasions, and weighty Matters, when properly called on; are yet the strongest Asseveration possible against them in common Conversation and familiar Discourse among Men. — And yet,

(Sorry I am to say it.) There are some grown up to that prodigious Height of Impiety, that they dare assault the very Heavens, and discharge whole Volleys of Blasphemies against that glorious Majesty that dwells there. They are not afraid to bid Defiance to Him, and challenge the God that made them, to do his worst, and miserably destroy them. They deck and adorn, (as they account it,) their common Discourses with horrid Oaths and Imprecations; not esteeming it manly without them. It consists not with the Greatness of their Spirits to

be

be wicked at the common Rate. They are willing to demonstrate to the World, that they are none of those puny Souls that are afraid of invisible Powers, or so much Cowards as to clip a full-mouthed Oath, by softening, (*) and suppressing the emphatical sounding Syllable, but think that a horrid Blasphemy makes the most sweet and graceful Cadence in their detestible Rhetorick. They

(*) The *refined* Ways of Swearing, (wherewith many deceive themselves, when they swear by any *other* thing, and not by their Maker,) as well as Lying, are equally to be avoided by us, inasmuch as they both spring from the same evil Root, and originate from the bold Offence. The different Ways of Refinement in Swearing, are too complicated and various to admit of a particular Detail, and are withall so gross, evident, and plain of themselves, as to stand self-detected on the least Consideration; so that we are without Excuse.

Indeed this very Precaution shows, that Men could as easily, if they were careful, avoid the Sin *wholly*, as attend to a *particular* Circumstance in the *Manner* of committing it. Which Circumstance, nevertheless, does not at all hinder it from ambushing in Reality to the very same thing. For, *swearing* by any *Creature*, does in Truth amount to the same thing, as swearing by the Name of *God* whose Creature it is, and who alone indeed can finally be supposed to be appealed to, for the *Truth* of the thing affirmed, and for the *Sincerity* of the Intention. "Whoso (saith our Saviour) shall swear by the Altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein. And he that sweareth by Heaven, sweareth by the Throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon." The Inference He draws from this Reasoning, is: Therefore, "swear not at all; neither by Heaven, for it is God's Throne; nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the City of the great King; neither by thy Head, because thou canst

not

They glory, that they have fully conquered all the trouble of the Notions of God and Hell, Virtue and Vice, Heaven and Hell, on that Degree, that they can now affront the Divine Majesty to his very Face, and not fear the worst he threatens in his Word against their Wickedness.

If there be a God, (which they scarce believe,) they are resolved audaciously to provoke him, to give them a convincing Evidence of his Being.

And, if He be, (as they are told he is,) rich in Patience and Forbearance, they are determined to try how far his Patience will extend, and what Load of Wickedness it is able to bear.

If their Destruction be not sure enough, they will do their utmost to make it so, by trampling underfoot the precious Blood and Wounds of the Son of God, and imprecating the Damnation of Hell upon their own Souls, as if it slumbered too long, and were slow-paced in its Motion towards them.

Not speaking further to this exceeding heinous and crying Sin, I shall,

First, Make one Hair white or black, But let your Communication be Yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of Evil. And so James, v. Above all things, my Brethren, swear not; neither by Heaven, nor by the Earth, nor by any other Oath, but let your Yea be Yea, and your Nay Nay, lest ye fall into Condemnation."

First, Shew that God hath absolutely forbidden the light and common Use of his Name, and of all Oaths in particular.

Secondly, That there are many and strong Reasons why he should.

Thirdly, That no Plea of any Weight can be made in Favour of them; and therefore,

Lastly, That all Men might easily and should therefore abstain from them.

Were all Men disposed as they ought to be, One would think it should be enough of itself that our Maker hath absolutely forbidden the unnecessary Use of his Name.

The THIRD Commandment, delivered by the Mouth of God himself from Mount Sinai, is plain to this Purpose; and by the Words before us, (which are so exceedingly strong against needless Oaths that rather than not condemn them effectually, our Saviour hath chosen to speak as if He condemned all Oaths in general,) it is yet further confirmed, and continues to be of the same Force and Weight as when first delivered with such awful Solemnity, "with Thunder & Lightning, with Smoak and exceeding Trembling."

Precepts,

Precepts delivered in such a Manner, we may be assured, God will expect us to obey with more than ordinary Care. God will not acquit a Blasphemer of his Words: God is a Witness of his Designs, and a true Beholder of his Heart, and a Hearer of his Tongue. And,

As for Imprecations; no Precept was ever more express than that of the Apostle against them, "Bless, and curse not." (*)

What shall we say then? Do we allow that God hath a Right to guide us, or not? We cannot say that this Sort of Language is a Duty; but, on the contrary, a Sin.

Suppose we could perceive no Kind of Harm in the Practice; yet doth not God know better? And Is

(*) When Men in common Conversation use Curses and Imprecations against their Brethren or themselves, as the Jews did, when they alledged Pilate and said, "Let his (Christ's) Blood be on us, and on our Children," It is either with an Intention and Desire that Mischief may befall them: which is both malicious towards Men, and also irreligiously thinking light of the Curse of God: Or else it is without any such Desire or Intention, and then it is profanely supposing God to have no Regard to their Behaviour. They should consider, that the Vengeance of God will find them out, not only for the evil Deeds they commit, but also for the profane Folly, (so frequent among us,) of calling that Damnation to themselves, which they otherwise but too well deserve. They who thus add to the Guilt of their Sins the binding Power of a Curse, are doubly unpardonable; they consent to their Punishment, as they before consented to their Crime: their Damnation therefore is every Way just. Serm. CXXIII.

Is it no Harm to do what He hath expresly forbidden?

Suppose He intends it only the Tryal and Exercise of our Obedience; is that a Reason why we should disobey? Do we bear this Treatment from our Inferiors; and can it then be the Treatment of the Father and Lord of all?

Surely, when once his Will is declared, That alone should be sufficient to regulate our Behaviour.

However, that we may see this Obligation in a yet fuller Light; and that Religion may suffer no Imputation of imposing arbitrary Commands upon us, I shall proceed,

Secondly, To shew, that there are great and powerful Reasons for the Precept before us.

God is a Being to whom the very highest of his Creatures owe all possible Regard and Honour; and certainly our low Condition and many Sins, ought not to lessen, but increase it.

The true Idea of God includes in it every thing that may give us awful, sublime, and reverential Thoughts of him; It represents him to our Minds as the greatest and best, the wisest and most perfect, and, (upon all these Accounts,) the most amiable of Beings; who gave Being to all things besides, and by the Word of his Power sustains them continually

tinually by Beings who fill Heaven and Earth with his Majesty; but whose Glory, in the more refulgent and immediate Manifestations of it, is above the Heavens; there he dwells in everlasting Light surrounded with an innumerable Company of Angels and glorious Spirits, whose blessed Employment it is to admire and adore, to praise and magnify Him forever.

But alas! How is it possible for us finite Creatures, and separated still at a greater Distance from him by our Sins, to think or speak of God in a Manner worthy of him! The nearer we endeavour to approach him, the more we are dazzled and oppressed with the Splendor of his infinite Perfections, and appear the less able either to conceive them, or to express our Conceptions of them.

Yet we see so much of his "eternal Power and Godhead by the things which he hath made," and the natural Light of our Minds, as is sufficient to strike us with the most profound Awe and Veneration for him, and make us fear, (as he himself expresses it,) his glorious and fearful Name.

How, then, can we suppose, when we see this Name of the Most High God, treated with the last Degree of Contempt? How can we suppose that any Person that affronts God, after so audacious a

Wonder, to have any true or becoming Notions of his Attributes?

He may, indeed, in general, believe the Existance of a Being we call God; but then he does not believe in this Being, "as God"—He cannot consider him as a Being of infinite Power, and Knowledge, and Justice, and in whose Hands, that very Breath is, wherewith he blasphemes.

It is impossible that any Person, who has these Sentiments of the Great God, should take his most holy and reverend Name so frequently, and so familiarly in Vain, as some are observed to do. And yet, without these Sentiments of the DIVINE Attributes, the God such Men pretend to worship, (if ever they perform any Acts of religious Worship,) is no God, but an Idol and Phantom of their own Imagination.

It is no Wonder, then, that those who are concerned for the Honour of God, and of his glorious Attributes, should be in the Most sensible Manner offended at a Practice, which strikes so directly both at his Honour and his Attributes, and by a necessary Consequence at his very Being. And therefore,

Setting-aside the Impiety of this Sin of customary swearing, it is One of the greatest Indecencies that can be committed in Conversation, especially in the Presence of those who pretend to a Sense of

Piety

Piety & Religion, or who bear the fairest Character.

If in Proportion to the Esteem we have for any Person, or our Relation to him, we think ourselves affronted by any Indignity offered him; how much higher must the Affront needs rise, and (One would imagine,) our Resentments with it, when the Eternal God, "whose we are, and whom we serve," is openly contemned and dishonoured?

But, What is the Anger or Resentment of Man on this Account, when compared to the Indignation of the Almighty?

"The Lord our God is a jealous God:" He cannot therefore suffer his "holy and reverend Name" to be intermixed with all the Trifles and Follies of our common Talk, but hath commanded us to pray that it may be sanctified and "hallowed."

Should He permit it, Piety and Virtue would be lost from off the Earth; for, if Men make free, in this Manner, with the most sacred of all things, what Possibility is there that any real Sense of Duty should remain among st them?

It cannot be, but we shall hereby be exposed to the most attrocious of Sins. — For

As "In a Multitude of Words, (as the wise Man observes,) there wanteth not Sin;" so, in a Multitude of Oaths there wanteth not Falsity.

As the boldest Swearers are generally the freest Talkers, and call Heaven to witness the most plentifully, they cannot avoid being guilty of false Oaths perpetually. (*)

Perhaps he will plead, that he was not in Earnest; but, are Oaths to be made Matter of Jest? are Invocations of God, solemn Vows and Imprecations, things for Men to cast wantonly around them, and say, "they are but in Sport?" (†) Re-

(*) *Ne videl, nec Juramentum debet esse commune. — Ex frequenti Jurejurando Perjurium nascitur. — Assiduitas jurandi, Perjurii Consuetudinem facit. — Usus jurandi aut Perjurium facit, aut Vesanum. Juramento non indiget.*

(†) A certain Divine expresses himself thus on the Matter:

"Passing-by the Idolatry there would be in swearing by false Gods, with any real Respect to their Authority, and the Absurdity and Impiety united in the Invocation of empty Names; Let us suppose the Offence in Question to consist in calling upon the Supreme Being in a Form of Words appropriated to Swearing, yet without any particular Intention of the Time seriously to request His Interposition, but merely to signify that we are angry perhaps, or perhaps *merry*, that we are somewhat *surprized*, or scarcely *sober*; that we are very zealous, or willing to be thought *witty*; or perhaps *without any Intention or Meaning whatever*. — And, where is the mighty Harm, it may be said, since it is all but in SPORT?

"SPORT! with Whom? the Creator and Lord of the Universe? before whom the highest Orders of the celestial Beings fall down and worship? whose Face no Man can see & live? is He a fit Subject for Sport? Or were He less great; consider, He is your Creator and Lord: you live, and move, and have your Being in Him: He made you what you are: He gives you all you have: He taketh away your Breath, you die

Remember, He, with whom we take these Liberties, hath made no Allowance for them in his Word, nor consequently will make any at the great Day of Account. The Rule of his Law is express: "Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the Name of thy God; I am the Lord," the Avenger of all such; and will by no Means hold him guiltless, that taketh my Name in vain. — And, we have no Kind of Intimation that this Command is to give way as often as we think proper to divert ourselves with transgressing it. Indeed, there is more intended, than expressed herein, "He will not hold him guiltless," (he) he will severely punish him, — he will take the Cause into his own Hands, being particularly, and, as it were, personally concerned in it.

The Penalties appointed by human Laws (*) are not

die; and are turned again to your Dust: Nay, He can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell: Is He a Subject of Sport?

"He gave his own, his only begotten Son, to suffer Death, to be crucified for your Sins: Is He a Subject for Sport?

As to *religious* Matters, you have nothing to do with them. And you sure of that? Can you demonstrate, that there is no God that made you? no Saviour to judge you? You know at least that you must die: what if you should then find that you have been mistaken? Will you stand such a Hazard for Sport?"

(*) Act of Gulielmi III. Anno 6 & 7, for the more effectual suppressing prophane Cursing and Swearing. Serm. CXXIII.

not always inflicted, and in the Case before us very rarely. Of a thousand Offenders, is there scarce one brought to the Magistrate? or he, for one of his Offences, in a thousand? — But,

The Divine Lawgiver, and Judge, who has annexed a peculiar Threatning to this Vice, is himself, we should consider, a Witness too of every Violation of it. Tho He bears indeed with our Offences; yet He notes them: and tho he be Long-suffering, He is also true and just, and will "by no Means clear the guilty." — But further,

Besides all that hath been already said, it contradicts the very Design and Spirit of Religion, which is a Spirit of Mildness and Benevolence, of Courtesy and Affability to all; which surely Cursing and Swearing are not. — For,

To our Superiors, they are Affronts and Indignities: to our Equals, they are Rudeness; and! it is a mean-spirited Insolence to shew our Contempt of those beneath us, by them, for no other Reason, than because we know they must bear it.

But further, — Besides this, it is a Crime of public Scandal (*) and bad Example, and is the Occasion

(*) Of all the nauseous, complicated Crimes,
That both infect and stigmatize the Times
There's none that can with impious Oaths compare,
Where Vice and Folly have an equal Share.

causes of the Increase of Wickedness, and, consequently, towards bringing down the just Judgments of God upon us.

These things being considered, there may seem to be little Need of saying any thing further of this Sin. But,

As too many are apt to think that whatever Objections there may be against it, there are likewise considerable Pleas to be made in its Favour; I shall therefore speak briefly to them. And,

1. It is said, that Oaths give Credit to what we say, and look like a Kind of Importance and Gravity in our Discourse.

Whereas, the very Phrases used in it, as well the Occasions, on which they are used, plainly prove the contrary. Indeed so far are they from adding Weight or Genuine, that they greatly weaken it, suggesting in a Man a perpetual Distrust of his own Reputation; and, instead of adorning his Discourse, it hereby becomes, to the last Degree, mean and contemptible, and too bold and daring for People of gentle and rational Breeding. (*)

(*) To

(*) If it be an Accomplishment, it is such a One as the meanest may make himself Master of; requiring neither Rank nor Fortune, neither Genius nor Learning. It is a Vice equally accessible.

Nec Dives, &c. Pauper abest, &c. Nox, &c. Dux, &c. Nullis minima absit.

Serm. [illegible].

To call upon God perpetually as a Witness to mean and trivial Matters, is a manifest Want of Reverence, and of a just Sense of God & Religion.

It must therefore be a great Charity that can find out a Way to reconcile a common Custom of Swearing with a serious Belief of the Christian Religion.

Besides, — Too much Asseveration gives Ground of Suspicion. Truth and Honesty have no need of loud Protestations. (*)

Simplicity and Plainness of Speech greatly becomes the Sincerity of Christians: Whose Profession teaches them to be so far removed from all Fraud and Deceit, in Imitation of their Master, in whose Mouth was found no Guile, that did they in any Measure live worthy of their holy Profession, there never would be any Ground of Suspicion, never any Occasion, never any Temptation in Matters of common Conversation and ordinary Concern, to make use of any such Asseverations, as our Saviour declares do "come of Evil." — Besides,

By making Oaths common in every Case, we lose the

(*) It is frequent with many, upon every trivial Matter to pawn their Reputation: A most inconsiderate thing! for what is so often lent, and pawn'd so many Hands upon every Occasion, cannot but lose much of its Value. — An honest Man is believed without an Oath; for his Reputation swears for him. *Mihi injurato plus credet quam tibi jurato. — Quamvis jurato nemini tibi credere velis.*

the Advantage of them in Cases EXTRAORDINARY; and are neither better respected or trusted for them, but, contrarywise, both as to our Word and Qualifications, are held in cheap and vile Account.

It is no Excuse, that they may commit it ignorantly; for certainly, is by no Means lessen the Fault that a Man hath got the Habit of it so perfectly that he knows not when he commits it, but rather argues how great and old a Sinner he is in this Way: and therefore that is high Time for him to break off these Sins by Repentance and Amendment. (*)

Especially as this Sin of all others, has the least of Temptation to it. (†) Other Vices propose some End, as their Enjoyment; (‡) but Swearing is wholly

(*) When we say of a Man who is hasty, passionate, prophane, inconstant, quarrelsome, morose, whimsical, exceptious, &c. that *It is his Manner*, or *He does not mean* so or so, we do not excuse him as entirely unaware, that his Faults are so great they are past mending.

It might herald a Philosopher to search the Root of Swearing to its Original, and assign its Place in the Constitution of Man: Is it a Passion, or an Appetite, or an Instinct? What is its just Measure? its proper Object? its ultimate End? Or is it wholly the Work of Art and Vice, which Men have invented for the sole Gratification of Pride without Profit of Pleasure or Profit? and of which there is no imaginable Temptation in Nature?

(†) *Vitia de Mercede solicitant, Avaritia Pecuniam promittit, Luxuria multas ac varias Voluptates, Ambitio Purpuram et Plausum; et ex hoc Potentiam, et quicquid Potentia ponit.* Serm. CXXIII.

wholly unprofitable, and of tasteless Account. Nay, by Nature, are we inclined to it. A Man may be naturally prone to Anger or Lust, but surely no Man was ever born of a Swearing Constitution.

If a Man, who being provoked to Anger, discharges his Passion, (as but too many are apt to do,) in profane Oaths, and still more execrable Curses and Imprecations, shall say, that the Provocations he received were such as forced him to it, and that he was so urged that he could not forbear: Let him, before he recounts this a reasonable Excuse, and some Connexion between being angry at a Man, & blaspheming God pray, make it appear by what Kind of Operation the vain and unlawful Use of God's Name, whether in Oaths or Imprecations, gives Ease to his Disorder, or restores things to rights again.

All that can be pretended for it is Custom; (*) but to shew that this is no Excuse, it is very observable, that it is particularly in the Matter of this Sin

(*) Evil Customs of the Times do what they will, suffer no Man to

Expressions, all things tending to Prophaneness, Immorality, Obscenity, and whatever is unfit to be said or done in the Presence of God, or wise and good Men.

Custom, without Reason, is no better than ancient Error.

against the Holy Ghost gives the Caution, "Thou shalt not follow a Multitude (*) to do Evil."

Lastly,

(*) *Codat Unus Multitudini.*

Nec Populo dicam? All the World leads, we follow.

Defendit Numerus, junctaque Umbone Phalanges.
Quicquid Multis *peccatur, inultum eſt.*

Men are apt to think that the Guilt of any Crime, & consequently the Punishment, may be very much diminished, if not wholly worn out, by the Multitudes of those who partake in it. Tho' the Weight of a Misdeed would be too heavy for *One* to bear, it grows light, in their Imagination, when it is shared among *Many*. But,

In this Case, a Man very much deceives himself; Guilt, when it spreads thro Numbers, is not so properly *divided*, as *multiplied*: Every one is criminal in Proportion to the Offence which he commits, not to the Number of those who are Companions in it. Both the Crime and the Penalty lie as heavy upon every Individual of the offending Multitude, as they would upon any single Person, had none shared with him in the Offence. In a Word,

The Division of Guilt is like to that of Matter; tho' it may be separated into infinite Portions, every Portion shall have the whole Essence of Matter in it, and consists of as many Parts as the Whole did before it was divided. But,

In the second Place, the Multitudes, who join in a Vice, cannot exempt themselves from the Guilt, they may from the Shame of it. The Scandal of a Vice is, in a Manner, lost and annihilated, when divided among a Multitude: As a Drop of the blackest Tincture wears away and vanishes, when mixed and confused in a considerable Body of Water, tho' the Dye be still in it, but is not able to discover itself.

This is certainly a very great Motive to Wickedness to those, who avoid Crimes, not as they are prejudicial to their Virtue, but to their Reputation. It is enough to shew the Weakness of this Reason,

Lastly, It deserves to be considered, that this Sin is so much the greater, because of the frequent Returns of it in those who are accustomed to it: (*)

So that, although it were but small in itself, at first, (as God knows it really is not,) yet the frequent Practice and Repetition of it, in a very short Time, will amount to a prodigious Height. (‡)

Upon the Whole: — It is really piercing to hear the Multitude of profane Oaths that proceed out of the Mouths of many, without any Sense of Evil they do, or Fear of any thing they must suffer for so doing. The Prophet tells us, that because of Swearing the Land mourneth; and undoubtedly many there are who are hereby afflicted and distressed, who little think from whence the Curse and secret Canker came (†). — And,

How

which publishes Guilt without covering it, that every Man who is habituated by it declares himself, in Effect, an infamous Hypocrite, that he prefers the Appearance of Virtue to its Reality, and is determined in his Conduct neither by the Dictates of his own Conscience, the Suggestions of true Honour, nor the Principles of Religion. — But,

Let us not be deceived by a Multitude, for we must stand alone when we die, and shall be called upon at the last Day to give an Account for Ourselves. Wherefore, "number not thyself among the Multitude of Sinners, but remember that Wrath will not tarry long."

(*) Small Transgressions become great by frequent Repetition.

(‡) *Adde parvum parvo magnus Acervus erit.*

(†) *Causa latet, Vis tamen notissima.*

How should it be otherwise, will God, (suppose ye,) bless those who daily curse him and "take his most holy Name in vain;" who defy his Laws, and call for Vengeance on themselves and others almost every Word they say? Can they expect a Blessing who scarce ever mention God but in the Way of Cursing, and make few other Prayers than for Plagues and Mischiefs, Damnation and eternal Wrath. (*)

It may be questioned whether this Kind of Impiety was ever carried to so high a Degree, in any Age or Nation in the Heathen World, or even in Hell itself. — It is probable the Devils, who already feel the Effects of God's Wrath, do not imprecate upon themselves fresh and further Degrees of it.

What a high and daring Proceeding, then, must it be, for Christians, who pretend to believe "the Terrors of the Lord," to call down, (in Terms which cannot be expressed without Horror,) That Vengeance upon their own Heads which they have justly incurred; and which God, perhaps, stands ready to inflict, without such Provocations.

How

(*) It is feared there are few Christians to be found, crying so oft to the Lord for Pardon, and that He would save them, as some Wretches among us are observed to cry *(horresco referens)* for God to d-n them, and the Devil to take and destroy them. Serm. CXXIII.

How merciful is God that He doth not grant them what they so passionately ask Him!

Should God, in Justice, fulfil their Petitions (as well He may, and the Sinner hath but too much Reason to expect,) the very Thoughts of its Consequence must make one tremble.

His Sentence is not executed speedily, and may indeed, by timely Repentance, be prevented: without This, the Stroke, however slow, is inevitable. Delay is no Security. On the contrary, the longer the divine Patience spares us, so much the more heinous is our Guilt, if we repent not, and the heavier must be our Punishment.

Let such, therefore, as are accustomed to this Sin, be assured, that, without sincere Repentance and Amendment, however God may deal with them in this World, He will most certainly, (according to their own Curses and repeated Wishes,) condemn and confound them in the World to come, where impious Mirth will be turned into Mourning; and the Laughter of Scoffers into Tears. Their prophane Oaths they will change into Supplications and Prayers: which now indeed might be heard, but will THEN be too late. Or rather, since the Day of Grace will be past, and even Repentance be then in vain, they may CONTINUE the Course they have now

Serm. CXXIII. yea,

yet [illegible] for whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil." (*) I would not only the gross Oaths, but all the silly Refinements and Softenings of them, (as already observed,) which Men have invented, in Order to make them seem innocent, for the the Name of God be not expressed, yet if it be implied, by mentioning something relating to God, instead of the very Deity himself; indeed, whatever Form is used to disguise it, the Sin is the same; and the Effect will be, bringing a sacred Obligation into Familiarity and Contempt. Let us keep ourselves, therefore, throughout the whole of our common Conversation within the Bounds of plain Affirmation or Denyal: for whatever goes beyond these, proceeds from a bad Turn of Mind, and will produce such Consequences.

"Whatsoever is more than these cometh of Evil."

Is it not therefore, truly strange, that what is so impossible to be excused or justified, should yet so generally prevail? — that That, which every One condemns in himself and others, should yet be suffered to reign, as it were, without Controul?

Ought not such Persons to be made more sensible of their Duty, and to pay more Honour to their constant heavenly Benefactor, and not so lightly & wantonly pollute that "great and terrible Name of God,"

(*) See Page 62, with the Note (*).

Glory which is adored by Angels, & which we are not worthy so much as to mention in our Prayers. "Let us honour his holy Name," not presuming even to speak of the great God, in a negligent Way: but preserving, in every Expression & Action, that Reverence to Him, which is due; which even Heathens strictly enjoined and followed, to the Shame of too many who call themselves Christians. (*)

Let any Man who dares not repeat the Name of his Prince without Honour, examine himself, whether he dares not to call Him or his Creator to be a Witness to a Lie, and to introduce it among all his empty and vain Follies.

Surely we know the Veneration which was paid by the *Ancient Jews* to a Name so great, wonderful, and holy; Who, (i.e. some of them, would not so much as let it enter even into their religious Discourses; whilst Others of them, whenever mention was made of *God*, used always to add, *whose Name be blessed*; and, Expressions of like Kind, we frequently find in the Writings of the Apostles.

The *Modern Jews* have run this Matter into a great and superstitious Extreme, of *never naming the Name of God at all.* In Opposition to which, (and Extremes are apt to produce each other,) Christians of later Ages have, to the highest Degree of Carelessness, allowed themselves to talk and dispute about God with all the Slightness and Irreverence, and with such absolute Unconcernedness, as if He were a Being to whom they had no Relation, & on whom they had no Dependance, who is so tremendous a Name in the ordinary Expressions of their Anger, Mirth, and most impertinent Passions, and admit it into their most familiar Questions and Assertions, ludricous Phrases, and Works of Fancy; not to mention those who violate it by solemn Perjuries: It would be an Affront to Reason to endeavour to set forth the Horridness & Prophaneness of such a Practice. The very Mention of it exposes

Let the Sense then of God's Honour, of his Command, and of our Duty consequent upon it, together with the Danger we run in committing this Sin, influence

passed it sufficiently to those in whom the Light of Nature, not to say Religion, is not utterly extinguished.

The very *Heathens* were afraid to pronounce the Name of their *Great God*, lest they should be punished grievously for the bare Mention of it. *Formulâ tantùm jurisjurandi contenti erant, Οὐ μὰ τὸν, vel* Νὴ τὸν, &c. How then doth the Reverence of *Heathens* to their false Gods, expose and aggravate the daring Impiety of professed Christians in their vile Indignities and Abuses of the great and terrible Name of the true God! — Indeed,

In this Matter, the more decent Behaviour even of the *Mahometans* whom we despise, may justly be a Reproach to us; and teach us to take heed, that in trivial and common Conversation, we be not found too often profaning the Name of God, and taking it in vain; thereby insensibly diminishing that great Guard of Religion, the due Sense Men ought to have of God upon their Minds.

In all these Examples, a good Christian, and a sober and wise Man, who has a true Sense of Religion; will easily judge, and (without any set Rules) naturally practise, what is (without Affectation) fit and decent, in all Cases of this Nature.

I find the following Passage in an excellent Sermon, preached at the Funeral of a Gentleman who was an Honour to his Country, and a more diligent & successful Enquirer into the Works of Nature, than any other Nation has ever produced: "He had the profoundest Ve-"neration for the great God of Heaven and Earth that I have ever "observed in any Person. The very Name of God was never menti-"oned by him without a Pause, and a visible Stop in his Discourse, in "which he was so exact as never to be observed once to fail in it."

We ought not to name God without a Reverence and Sense of Him upon our Minds.

influence us to Confideration, to Repentance, and Amendment: that ſo we may ever be reſtrained from profaning the Name of our God, always remembering, that He is the Lord, and, conſequently, will not hold him guiltleſs, that taketh his Name in vain.

Reſpecting that OTHER Sin, (already mentioned,) and almoſt always joined with it, as near of Kin to it, viz. that monſtrous Cuſtom of CURSING; in direct Contradiction to all Humanity! and to the expreſs Words of Scripture; I ſhall only add that to with the heavieſt Judgments of God, even eternal Damnation, to a Perſon, for the ſlighteſt Cauſe, or none at all; to with the ſame to Ourſelves, if ſome trifling thing, that we are ſaying, be not true, amounts to the moſt deſperate Impiety, if People at all conſider what they ſay. And, tho they do not, it is even then thoughtleſsly treating God, and his Laws, and the awful Sanctions of them, with Contempt, and blotting out of their Minds all ſerious Regard to Subjects, that will one Day be found moſt ſerious things. "His Delight was in Curſing, (ſays the Pſalmiſt,) and it ſhall happen unto him: He loved not Bleſſing, therefore ſhall it be far from him."

I ſhall only add to the foregoing, that if we in no

Way prophane the Name of God ourselves; yet if we entice others to Perjury and Falsehood, or provoke them to rash Oaths and Imprecations; or give them any needless Temptation to blaspheme God: by such Behaviour also we become accessary to the Vice itself; and consequently shall not be held guiltless in it.

Let us, therefore, be watchful to preserve continually such an Awe of the Supreme Being upon our Minds, and those who belong to us, as may on every Occasion effectually suppress them from all Tendencies hereto; for "God is greatly to be feared in the Assembly of his Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all them that are round about him."

I shall Conclude all with the Advice of the Son of Sirach, which is excellent to the Purpose before us:

"Accustom not thy Mouth to Swearing, neither use thyself to the naming of the Holy One; for, as the Servant that is continually beaten shall not be without a blue Mark, so he that sweareth, and nameth God continually, shall not be faultless."

"A Man that useth much Swearing shall be filled with Iniquity, and the Plague shall never depart from his House: If he shall offend, his Sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledge it not, he maketh a double Offence."

SERMON CXXIV.

Against rash Vows and Promises.

Eccleſiaſtes v. 2. "Be not raſh with thy Mouth, "and let thine Heart be haſty to utter any "thing before God."

My Deſign from theſe Words, is to lay before you what can be produced againſt the heedleſs Practice of raſh Vows and inconſiderate Promiſes.

And here, — By Raſhneſs we are to underſtand the doing any thing without ſufficient Thought and Deliberation, - the running ourſelves haſtily into Matters, either without reflecting at all upon them, or without ſuch a Meaſure of Conſideration, as ſhall enable us to make a prudent Choice. (*) This,

(*) "The more Haſte, the worſe Speed," is a Proverb of good Admonition to Calmneſs and Sedateneſs in the Management of Affairs; it is a Reprehenſion to precipitate Tempers, who frequently, by Over-Eagerneſs, marr all their Undertakings; It is much the ſame in Senſe with that other common Proverb, "Haſte makes Waſte:" And there are ſeveral Proverbs in ſeveral Languages to the ſame Purport.

Quæ ſatis parata, minus præparat. — Nimium properat, qui nihil abſolvit.

Nothing haſtily.

Among the Greeks, we have, Ἁμαξιδὶ ἁμαξιὰ τροχὸς τίκτει.

And the Romans, *Quæ feſtinat, tarde parturit Catulos.*

This, in the general, must appear, at first Sight, to be ridiculous; because it is giving up our Reason, and deserting the immediate Guide of our Actions.

But, This is not what I so much intend; I mean not to consider the Matter in so extensive a View: What I design, is, to speak concerning Rashness, as it is applied to Promises or Oaths; which, passing over a certain Right to another, and giving him a Claim to something from us, they ought surely to be previously well weighed and considered. (*)

Men will see this plainly in the greater Affairs of Life.

What Man of common Sense would enter into sudden Engagements without once thinking at all about them, where perhaps his whole Fortune is risked, and the least false Step may ruin him?

Men are generally cautious enough in such Instances;

(*) *Prius expende Vires tuas, quàm aggrediaris Negotium, ne cultus Difficultate, turpiter relinquas quod temerè suscepisti. Qui consultè Res agit, tutè agit. Turpe illud est, si quid tandem acciderit, dicere, Quis hæc futura putasset? —* Be not over-precipitate in your Designs: Great Designs require great Considerations; they must have their Time of maturing, otherwise they will prove abortive. *Tempus ad Res considerandas adhibue.* See the preceeding Note. If therefore you are pressed at any Time to do a thing *hastily*, be careful; Fraud and Deceit are always in *Haste*: Diffidence is the Right-Eye of Prudence. — *Ne non-portet temerè aggredi, quæ semèl facta mutari non possunt.*

matter; and if they are found to err, they generally meet with the Contempt which they deserve.

But as in the main Affairs of Life are once settled, Men are apt to give themselves greater Licence in other Particulars. They imagine lesser Matters are not worth considering, as though Prudence had no Room to shew itself here, and Men might, in things of inferior Moment, be as ridiculous as they please. — And, so indeed we might allow them to be, if they would not hereby run themselves into serious Difficulties; if they would take care that Others might receive no Prejudice from their Follies, and that they themselves might not unawares be drawn into Sin. Yet,

This doth, and must prove the Case, where Men do not sufficiently consider what Promises they make.

Perhaps the thing may be impossible or sinful. Though possible, it may yet be attended with such Inconveniences as may strongly tempt a Man to violate his Promise; or, if he should notwithstanding keep it, he may thereby be injurious to his Family and Dependants.

In all these Cases the rash Engagement is not only absurd, but wicked. It is absurd, because it is not

guided by THAT Reason which ought to influence it; and it is sinful, because it either directly involves him in Sin, or strongly temptethhim to it.

We have several remarkable Instances of this, handed down to us in Holy Writ. (*)

"The Time would fail me to speak fully" of Jephtha, of Herod, and of more than forty Men at once of the Jews, who are our Examples in this.

As to Herod, that rash Person, upon a very slight Occasion, made a Promise to the Daughter of Herodias, that "he would give her whatsoever she would ask." He never once considered that from a Promise thus given at large, Demands might be made which were improper to be granted.

Had he been exposed to this Inconvenience only, the Absurdity of his Rashness even here, must be apparent. But,

When we consider withall, that Occasion was hereby given to the making of Demands that were unlawful; when we consider what was in Fact, the Consequence, "no less than the Head of John the Baptist," the Murder of the innocent and righteous:

When

(*) We may draw Advantage as well from the Errors, as the Virtues of Mankind. By noting in what they have failed, we may learn to frame wiser Schemes of Management for ourselves. Such Characters are delivered down to us, not to be imitated, but abhorred; and "are written, (as the Apostle tells us,) for our Admonition."

When we consider this, we cannot acquit [illegible] (nor with him, every like Person) of gross Sin[illegible] as well as extreme Folly.

As to JEPHTHAH, and the ill Fate of his rash and inconsiderate Vow, it is too well known here to be enlarged on; save that as it begun in Folly, it end- [illegible] the Sacrifice, [illegible] (*) of a most dutiful and affectionate Daughter.

As to that wicked and diabolical Conspiracy of the Jews, "in which more than forty of them banded together, and bound themselves, under a great Curse, that they would neither eat, nor drink, till they had killed PAUL;" and the happy Discovery and Prevention of their horrid Enterprize, this, the same Time that it discovers to us the watchful Care, Providence, and Protection of God, over righteous Persons, should equally guard us against all rash and inconsiderate Undertakings, especially such as have Evil for their Object. — But further,

In our too eager and over-fond Delight of Persons [illegible] and

(*) God abhorred human Sacrifices. *Jephthah was a Gileadite*, consequently no Priest, and therefore could not sacrifice his Daughter. She deplored her Virginity, not her Death; for it is said that the Daughters [illegible] to talk with her, not to lament her.

and things, we are sometimes, and indeed not seldom, with the Examples here cited, led to further Extremes in this Matter, and add to our rash Promises, vain and inconsiderate Vows; thereby "confirming with an Oath," what would have been our Wisdom to have "denied in Words." (‡)

When an extravagant Promise is confirmed by the Solemnity of an Oath, the Matter here must be exceedingly aggravated; for an Oath, being a serious and religious Rite, ought not to be used on any slight or common Occasion; much less to bind ourselves by it to the Commission of Folly, or to the perpetrating of what is really Evil.

An Oath is an Invocation of God, as a Witness to the Truth of what we affirm, or to the Sincerity of what we promise.

This therefore must, from the very Nature of it, require great Seriousness, and exceeding Composure and Preparation of Mind. (*) Oaths

(‡) See the prudential Conduct of our Saviour in this Case, (Mark x. 35, &c.) Tho' he knew what was in the Heart of Man, and needed not that any should tell him, yet prudently declined resolving the Request of two of his aspiring Disciples, James and John, who presumed upon his Friendship and Favour towards them, till they had declared the utmost of their Intent in it; and then shewed them the Folly of their Request: "Ye know not (said he) what ye ask; for, (as he goes on in the Sequel,) tho' they could drink of his Cup, and be baptized with the Baptism that he was baptized with; yet to sit on his Right-hand and on his Left, was not his to give, but would be given to them for whom it was prepared."

Christian Conversation, even though the thing commanded, there be such as are condemned in holy Scripture, our Saviour having required, that the utmost we should do, in our ordinary Discourse, is only to use repeated Affirmatives or Denials? But they are still more criminal when the Matter confirmed by them is uncertain; as the thing promised the Jewish ceremonial Law, which is now wholly abolished, or else they signify only general Resolutions of serving and obeying God, which can never too often or too seriously be renewed; as when Jacob vowed that the Lord should be his God; (for) that is good Christian Resolution for us to be stedfast in the true Religion.

In the New Testament there is, (I think,) no one Instance of any Vow made by a Christian; the Vow of Aquila, and that of the four Persons in whom St. Paul partook himself, being both of them Vows which had been made before their Conversion to Christianity.

Baptism, indeed, and the Lord's Supper, are solemn Vows of Obedience towards God: but the Matter of them is such as was our indispensible Duty before: and such solemn renewing our holy Resolutions of doing what is of absolute Necessity to be done, is undoubtedly of great and perpetual Use. But in other Cases, Vows are at best nothing but needless Snares upon Men; and generally they are of superstitious and otherwise unable Matters: For what is fit to be done, may be done without laying upon ourselves unnecessary Obligations; and such Obligations can be of no Benefit, but needlessly to involve Men in Snares and Scruples. — So that the best Direction to be given to Christians concerning this Matter, is, never to entangle themselves in any other Obligations at all; but only take care to keep those sacred Vows and Resolutions, which they solemnly enter into at Baptism and the Supper of the Lord.

A Vow is a Kind of Prison which restrained Nature has a Mind to break.

Serm. CXXIV.

and Things; we are sometimes, and indeed not seldom, with the Examples here cited, led to further Extremes in this Matter; and add to our rash Promises, vain and inconsiderate Vows; thereby "confirming with an Oath," what would have been our Wisdom to have "denied in Words." (*)

When an extravagant Promise is confirmed by the Solemnity of an Oath, the Matter here must be exceedingly aggravated; for an Oath, being a serious and religious Rite, ought not to be used on any slight or common Occasion; much less to bind ourselves by it to the Commission of Evil.

(*) A Vow, being a Promise made solemnly before God, partakes of the Nature of an Oath. Vowing therefore to do what there no Use of doing, is trifling with our Creator: making unlawful Vows, is directly telling him, we will disobey him: making such without Necessity, or are difficult to keep, is leading ourselves into Temptation: and indeed, making any, without much Thought & prudent Advice first, usually proves an unhappy Snare.

The Vows mentioned in the Old Testament are all either Parts of the

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A Vow is a Kind of Fetter which restrained Nature has a Mind to break.

mised what we may not perhaps be able to perform.

It is to affront God very highly, to make our Appeal to Him on common Occasions. — And, — in this Case we lay ourselves open to unknown Requests, and vow the Performance of hidden Events.

But, should the Rest of things happen, and nothing be requested, nor encounter us, but what is innocent, and such as a wise and good Man might reasonably give way to; yet still, this is nothing to us, not to our Commendation; but should be rather ascribed to our good Chance from the Providence of God rightly disposing things for us; and consequently demands from us the Tribute of Praise, Thanksgiving, and Repentance, in the Amendment of our Conduct for the future, to sin no more, in any such grievous Instance, "lest a worse Evil in Time should come upon us." — For,

When Vows and Promises are made in such general Terms, Room is left for making Demands, & performing things both unreasonable and sinful.

Indeed, On this Footing we may determine, that the Engagement itself, whatever should be the Consequence, was, from the Beginning, criminal and impious. — And therefore, It is not to be wondered, if a Proceeding, thus bad in the Beginning, should be answered and followed by Events as fatal.

To

To resume our former Instances, behold the Consequences of these things!

Herod had sworn "to grant whatever the Daughter of Herodias would ask of him."

He had not considered that an Engagement made in such general Terms, might lead him into something extremely criminal. — But,

When the Damsel "demanded the Head of John the Baptist," he saw his Error, and was sorry; but it was then too late: One of two Evils, of Course, remained for him, & he unhappily chose the greatest; rather assenting to the Murder of the innocent and righteous, than falsify his Oath, which was in itself sinful. — Again,

Can any One help lamenting the unhappy Fall of Jephtha, and the Rashness of his inconsiderate Vow! If an Herod was sorry, when he found that the sad Effects of his rash Promise, confirmed with an Oath, was the Death of the Baptist, a Man whom through Policy he had shut up in Prison; what Upbraidings of Conscience, and heart-felt Remorse must now drown the Soul of a tender and affectionate Father, for sacrificing his Daughter, his only Child, in Consequence of this, who presented herself in Gladness before him, rejoicing at her Father's Triumphs!

"When he saw her, he rent his Cloaths, and said,

"Alas, my Daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, for I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back." (*)

As to that last Particular, of the treacherous Conspiracy against Paul, we have nothing further mentioned of them; and whether they were inconsiderate of their Engagement, or were starved into a Compliance with Nature, or died a Sacrifice to their more rash and impious Vow, we know not; but, this we know, that by the Care and Assiduity of a good Governour, Paul was delivered from their Hands, and they were left to themselves, and to be the Objects of their own Imprecations.

Thus notoriously did all these fall thro' the Vice before us; and the sad Effects daily flowing from it, tho in lesser Instances, are too striking to need here any further Enlargement. — For "Hasty Resolutions are seldom fortunate: (†) It

(*) The thoughtless Man hiddeth not his Tongue; he speaketh at Random, and is entangled in the Foolishness of his own Mouth.

As One that runneth in Haste, and leapeth over a Fence, may fall into a Pit on the other Side, which he could not see: so is the Man that plungeth himself suddenly into an Action, before he hath considered the Consequences of it.

(†) Danger commonly attends inconsiderate Actions.

Qui sunt Sapientes, non precipitanter, aut inconsiderate; sed sensim et cunctanter Negotium aggrediuntur; et Arte magis, quam Impetu Rem gerunt.

It is a Piece of neceſſary Prudence, therefore, for a Man, before he reſolves upon any thing, to conſider well what may be the Conſequence of it. (*)

I ſhall only add, that to act thus impetuouſly, without the direct Guide of our Reaſon, is to act beſide the common Practice of our Nature. God hath endued us with Reaſon, that we might purpoſedly reflect, - that we might conſider our Ways & be wiſe, - that we might govern our inordinate Paſſions, and all Zeal without Knowledge, the general Incentives to all Precipitateneſs.

To be governed by Reaſon, is the general Law impoſed by the Author of Nature upon Man, whoſe uppermoſt Faculty is Reaſon.

It is, therefore, beneath the Dignity of our Nature, to act thus blindly in important Points, and precipitately without Reaſon; being ourſelves, in this

runt. Præcipita enim Concilia plerumque ſunt inauſpicata. Nihil ſubitò, et benè poteſt perfici: nàm, ut Canis feſtinans cæcos parit Catulos; ita Error et Pœnitentia Feſtinationis ſunt Comites. Ut quæ citò nata, citò pereunt; ita quæ citò ſiunt, Ætatem non ferunt.

Not that it is hereby intended, that we ſhould be always thinking and conſulting; Nor *Dimidium enim Operis peractum eſt ei, qui jam cœpit aggreſſus. Dimidium Facti qui bene cœpit habet. Sunt enim qui cunctando et deliberando Vitam omnem abſumunt. Lentè conſultum, at ubi ſtatueris, maturè quod opus factu, faciendum eſt.* See Note (*) Page 88.

(*) *Sapientis eſt, nihil quod pœnitere poſſit, facere.*

this Case, in Subjection to inferior Faculties, which should be subject to us.

Think therefore before you speak, and consider before you promise.

Take Time to deliberate and advise, but lose no Time in executing your Resolutions. (*)

Great things are said by the Heathens in Favour of Reason: "Reason, (say they,) is the Image of God;" "is the governing Part, - the supreme, and principal, and first Quality in the Soul."

And, — What is thus highly exalted, should always maintain its Dignity, and be the governing Principle in all our Actions.

"Be not, therefore, rash with thy Mouth, and let not thine Heart be hasty to utter any thing before God;" for "God needeth not the Sacrifice of Fools, neither will He be pleased with the Devices of the Ignorant."

(*) Undertake not with Rashness, nor perform with Indifference: the One shows a weak Mind, the other a slothful Disposition. Resolve therefore upon nothing of Moment but by the Advice and Permission of Right-Reason; and when we have once resolved, let nothing divert the Execution, but a Countermand from the same Authority.

Sermon

SERMON CXXV.

How far rash Vows and Promises are obligatory, and binding to Performance.

Eccles. v. 4. "Pay that which thou hast vowed."

For, "better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than vow and not pay."

It hath been Matter of Doubt with some how far the Obligation of rash Vows and Promises doth in several Cases reach.

It hath been observed under a former Reflection, that rash Vows and Promises are not only absurd, but sinful; and yet we dare not affirm, that merely on this Account they cease to oblige.

What was faulty in the Original, may be binding in its Consequences. And, accordingly,

There is a Maxim which will hold in this Case, as well as in some others, "that those things, which upon the Account of some Irregularity, ought not to have been done at first, are yet valid and binding when done."

There

There are therefore Instances in which the Rashness of our Engagements cannot excuse us from performing them; and where, if some Difficulties & Inconveniencies should arise, we must bear them as the Punishment of not having considered better.

It is the Character of an honest Man, (given us by the Psalmist,) that "he sweareth to his Neighbour, and disappointeth him not, tho it were to his own Hindrance."

The Words before us are fully expressive of this: "When thou vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for He hath no Pleasure in Fools; pay that which thou hast vowed."

"Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin, neither say thou before the Angel, that it was an Error: Wherefore should God be angry at thy Voice?"

We have it also expressed to us under the Law: "When thou shalt vow a Vow, thou shalt not slack to pay it; for, it will surely be required of thee; & it will be Sin unto thee. But,

"If thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no Sin in thee.

"That which is gone out of thy Lips thou shalt keep and perform, according as thou hast vowed, &

according

"according as thou hast promised with thy Mouth:

"If a Man vow unto the Lord, or swear an Oath to bind his Soul with a Bond, he shall not break his Word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his Mouth."

"Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths."

"It is a Snare, then, for a Man to devour that which is holy, and after Vows to make Inquiry."

In Matters of PRIVATE Discretion, or Advantage, it concerns us to look well to things in the Beginning; but, if we fail here, and bind ourselves down to that which may be prejudicial in its Consequences, we must not think of retreating when it is too late. The Promise, and perhaps the Oath of God is upon us, and we must perform it to the full.

We have a singular Instance of this in JOSHUA, and the Princes of Israel with him, who were observant of their Oath to the Inhabitants of Gibeon, and spared them, notwithstanding they had fraudulently obtained the Oath and Promise from them: "We have sworn unto them, (said they) by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them."

We have another remarkable Instance of this in

the Case of ISAAC, and the Blessing which his Son JACOB obtained artfully of him.

The holy Father did not so much consider the Manner by which the Blessing was obtained, as the Formality of the Blessing itself, tho he trembled at it.

"And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? Where is he that hath taken Venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? Yea, and he shall be blessed."

In all Cases of this Nature, we pass over some Right or other from ourselves; and therefore must be bound so far as we are capable of making that Right away.

If then, what we promise simply, or else engage by Oath, be a thing which we lawfully might have done, without any Engagement of that Kind, it is certain that we are bound to perform it; for, there can be no such thing as Obligation at all, if Promises and Vows are not inviolably to be kept.

Let all our Promises, therefore, be sincere, and so prudently conducted, (*) as not to exceed the Reach of our Ability. He who promises more than he

(*) Let Reason go before every Enterprize, and Counsel before every Action.

he is able to perform, is false to himself; and he who does not perform what he has promised, is unjust to his Friend.

Thus far, then, we see, that those very Vows, which were rash and criminal in the making, may yet bind us to their Performance.

If therefore we have promised what we may lawfully, but cannot conveniently, do; we are by no Means, on that Account, released from our Engagement, unless we were either unqualified to promise, or were deceived in promising; or the Person, to whom we have engaged, voluntarily lets us at Liberty, or the Circumstance of the Case be plainly and confessedly such, that our Promise was not originally designed to bind us in them.

If none of these mitigating Circumstances can be admitted, we are bound to Performance.

Yet, — There are other Cases in which Vows and Oaths themselves cannot oblige, in which we cannot, or must not, act, and consequently, where we have nothing else to do but to repent of those Engagements which we are unable to, or dare not answer. — These are reducible to two Heads.

First, Where the thing engaged for is impossible. And,

Secondly, When it is in itself, or in its Circumstances, unlawful.

I shall say very little of those Oaths, Promises, & Vows, which regard things impossible.

The Obligation of such is affirmed by no One. For, we cannot assign a better Reason for the Non-performance of any thing than THIS, that it is absolutely beyond our Power. — But,

Notwithstanding there is no Obligation to Performance, yet there is to Repentance. — And,

Perhaps, it would be proper to attempt some Amends, in the Ways we are able, for the WHOLE of which we are incapable. — This at least deserves to be seriously considered; and, as such, is recommended in the Case. But,

Secondly, The most considerable Point is THAT, where the Matter of our Vows and Promises is unlawful (*).

To resume here again the Instances which we have so often had Occasion to have Recourse to under these Subjects.

Jephtha and Herod had both of them virtually sworn

(*) If we either promise or threaten, any thing which we cannot lawfully do; making such a Promise is a Sin; but keeping it would be another, perhaps, a greater: and therefore it innocently may, and in Conscience ought to be broken.

sworn to be the Deaths of their Victims, by engaging themselves under GENERAL Vows of Performance.

The Former, "to sacrifice whatever should come forth of the Doors of his Houle to meet him."

The Latter, "to grant whatever the Damsel should ask or demand of him."

As to the Conspirators against the Life of the Apostle, they, (as they had actually sworn against his Life,) were therefore actually guilty of it before God, though by happy Means preventing, they were kept from it. But,

Besides these, hasty Declarations and rash Asseverations are sometimes made by good Men, who cannot however reasonably or conscientiously fulfill them. [viz]

When Jesus had washed the Feet of several of his Disciples, He came to Simon Peter; and "Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my Feet? Jesus answered, and said, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter said unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my Feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no Part with me. Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, not my Feet only, but also my Hands, and my Head."

Again, — "A certain Man had two Sons, and he came to the First, and said, Son, go work to Day in my Vineyard: and he answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented and went.

"And he came to the Second and said likewise; and he answered and said, I go Sir, and went not.

"Whether of them twain did the Will of his Father?" — Higher yet,

The holy Angels, (whose Examples we are commanded to follow,) are to us Precedents in this.

"And there came two Angels to Sodom at Even, and Lot sat in the Gate of Sodom, and Lot seeing them, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his Face towards the Ground;

"And he said, behold, now my Lords, turn in, I pray you into your Servant's House, and tarry all Night, and wash your Feet, & ye shall rise up early, and go on your Ways. And they said, NAY; but we will abide in the Street all Night.

"And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his House; & he made them a Feast, and did bake unleavened Bread, and they did eat."

Nor can even Vows, however solemn, be binding, when the Object of them is the Commission of a Crime; for, though Appeals to the Deity are

sacred

sacred Pledges of our Sincerity; nor can they make the Change in the Nature or Quality of Actions; and it would be the grossest Superstition to suppose, that the Violation of God's Ordinances can either be honourable or acceptable to Him.

David, in Revenge for an Insult offered by NABAL, vowed, that he would put to the Sword every Male of his Family; but, when his Wrath was appeased, he became so sensible of the Injustice of his Design, that he said, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath kept his Servant from Evil."

"In this Case, as in those of Jephtha, Herod, and the Conspirators against the Life of St Paul, the thing itself was sinful, & the Oaths & Vows unlawful, as to the Matter, and therefore without any Effect, (*) or Obligation, as to the Consequence. For, no irregular Act of ours, can make THAT lawful, which

(*) It is unjust and unfit for a Man to oblige another to keep a Promise disadvantageous to him, or One made in Mirth, Passion, Haste, unadvisedly, in Civility, &c. — as also not to admit of a reasonable Excuse, in Case of Failure.

Those Promises are not to be kept, that a Man makes when he is either Compelled by Fear, or deceived by Fraud.

Jurisjurandi non est Mala ex causa, minime obligat Conscientiam.

Pacta semper ex Promissis servanda sunt, quæ aperti, aut Dolo malo facta sunt; Illa servanda non sunt, quæ non sunt ex ipsis, ullis quibus illa promiseris. — In all Promises, the *Intention* is to be considered, not the *Letter*; none are binding but what are *just*. Serm. CXXV.

which in itself unlawful, or bind us to perform, what we must censure and condemn ourselves for doing.

This Determination will be supported, by observing, that no One can give another a Right to claim from him, what he had no Right to give; nor bind himself to do that, which he had no Right to perform.

Every binding Oath, Promise, or Vow, must suppose the Man capable of being bound who makes it.

And, This must further suppose, that he might, or had Authority to perform what he pretends thus to oblige himself to. Otherwise,

This Absurdity, or Contradiction, will arise, [viz] that, the very same Time, a Man may be under contradictory Obligations:

An original Obligation to forbear an Action, in Obedience to God's Will, and a contrary Obligation to perform the Action, in Consequence of his own Oath, Promise, and Vow.

If this Absurdity be not sufficiently apparent, we may add, that these two opposite Obligations must mutually destroy each other, as all things equal and contrary, when in Contact, necessarily do.

That in such a Case as this, a Man is really under

no Obligation at all, to act either Way, but is entirely and absolutely at his Liberty; & consequently, upon this Foot of arguing, no Obligation can arise from Promises or Oaths, where the Subject-Matter of them is unlawful. But,

Perhaps, it may be said, that the Obligation arising from the Promise or Oath removes all original Obligation—that the Man is thenceforward bound to fulfil his new Engagement—and therefore that the Difficulty in this Case is avoided, by maintaining, that two opposite Obligations do not subsist together, the latter destroying the former, to which it succeeds. But,

This Evasion must appear to be indefensible from what hath been already observed. For,

If we were originally bound to obey the Will of God, we could have no Right or Authority to disobey him in the least. And,

Of Consequence, we could not lay ourselves under any Kind of Obligation to disobey him. And it were a Contradiction to suppose that God would oblige us to it.

Nor can Man, he could not; because, a lower Obligation cannot possibly make void a greater.

I shall add one Consideration further to this Purpose, [viz.] It is to be still affirmed, that the latter

Obligation doth, in this Case, destroy the former, then we shall run ourselves into this Absurdity, [viz.] that in this Way, we have it in our Power to make void all Kind of Obligation whatever? A contrary Promise or Vow, on this Footing, will effect it. At this Rate, what single Point, either in Religion or Morality, can be sufficiently bound upon us? Indeed,

Upon the Principle, by which it is pretended that Oaths and Vows are obligatory, where the Matter of them is unlawful, we clearly prove that they cannot at all oblige.

We may, doubtless, suppose that one Oath or Vow doth as much oblige as another; and if one Obligation may be destroyed by a succeeding, this will as well hold concerning any other supposable Obligation, which may be equally destroyed by it.

On this Footing, a Man must have it in his Power to make void all Obligations, whenever he pleases; and that only by making a contrary Vow to it, and this he may do as often as Humour or Interest may suit him.

If this be once admitted, Faith must fail from among Men, and it would be difficult to show how any Man can be strictly obliged to any thing.

Upon the Whole: Since then we have no Right

or

or Authority to do any ill thing, and consequently cannot, by any Act of ours, change the Nature of things, and make that lawful, which is in itself unlawful. We declare, that we are not bound to it; but that every Act of that Kind must be null and void from the Beginning, and therefore to be retracted with sincere Repentance, than fulfilled in sinful Perseverance. (o)

There are few indeed, (we allow,) who come up to the Instances already recited, they are rare, and the Height of their Malignity may sufficiently account for it; scarce any pretend to justify these things by alledging an Oath as an Excuse for committing them, or think that in such shocking Instances as these, the Plea would be available. Yet,

They sometimes act by the same Principle in other Instances. Their Guilt, because they have practised, or perhaps sworn to do it, no more a Plea, than it should themselves would condemn in one Instance, ought not to be as much condemned in another.

(o) *Minima de Malis.*

taking it is a Sin to be repented of; but the breaking it is a necessary Duty, and a Branch of that Repentance, which is due for the former making it.

and apply it to what hath been already remarked.

This will make the Reflections before us more useful, when it is seen, that they do not refer only to imaginary Cases, but are equally applicable to Matters of certain & known Fact. For Instance;

A Child perhaps proves obstinate, as well as disobedient to a Parent, in some Articles which concern him: He cannot be influenced, either by Perswasion or Authority, but still continues refractory.

It is not to be wondered here, if such a Conduct should be resented.

Something this Way may be proper; but the Misfortune is, that Matters in this Case, are apt to be carried too far.

The Man, in a Passion, disinherits his Child; resolves never more to bear the least favourable Respect towards him, confirms these Resolutions by Oaths and Imprecations, and will leave no Room for the Child's Repentance, even tho he should seek it carefully with Tears.

The Question arising from it is this; Is the Parent bound by any Oaths of this Kind, however made, or frequently repeated, entirely to desert his Child?

By no Means: The Vow was rash, & the Matter of it unlawful; and therefore, agreeable to the

Principles

Principles already laid down, can bind, not to Perfection, but to Repentance. Due,

It will be said, perhaps, May not a Man do what he will with his own, and dispose of his Fortune in what Manner he pleases, & take that Liberty which the Laws of his Country allow him?

We think not, in all Cases.

If a Man were to be virtuous and honest no further than he could be compelled to it by a Civil Court, he might be extremely wicked: Much is left to the Determination of Conscience, and is concerns Men to decide faithfully.

To come more home to the Point. There is a NATURAL Obligation, from which no Man can free himself, [viz] to take care of his Children: That Being which a Man gave Life to, he must, according to the Law of Nature, (if able,) sustain.

He, (saith St. Paul,) that careth not for his own, especially those of his own House, hath denied the Faith, and is worse than an Infidel.

Ill Conduct and Disobedience may forfeit Favours, and things which are the Encouragements of Obedience; but Matters of Right, such as is a Subsistence, (if the Parent is capable of affording it,) cannot be forfeited.

To afford this, he was bound originally as a Parent; and therefore no rash or irregular Act of his, can afterward render the Obligation of none Effect.

But, it may be said, Are Children to be all placed on an equal Footing, and no Distinction to be made, either to encourage the good, or to repress the wicked?—This we dare not say; Room is here left for the Exercise of Prudence, and to carry on domestic Affairs wisely. Upon the Whole, Thus much, we think, may be affirmed safely:

First, That whatever the Conduct of a Child may be, yet still he retains a Right to common and ordinary Subsistence. This the Parent is naturally bound to afford him, if he can; & no Engagements to the contrary can here disannul it.

Secondly, It may be affirmed, that as a Child, who hath once proved disobedient, tho in an important Article, may afterwards repent; so, upon his Repentance, the Parent is bound to pardon him. This is a Principle as well of natural, as of revealed Religion. And,

If he is bound to pardon, he must, of Consequence, be obliged to shew all the proper Marks & Tokens of Pardon.

An Oath or Vow, therefore, never to forgive, must be in itself unlawful; and as he had no Right to make it, he can have no Right to keep it. (*)

Several other Particulars, relating to the Purpose before us, might here be mentioned. But,

Thus much may be of some Use; and it is hoped, that, as Occasion shall require, it will be properly applied.

(*) See the Note assigning the only justifiable Cause of Parents disinheriting their Children, - in the Sermon on the Duty of Parents.
See also No. 181 of the Spectator.

SERMON CXXVI.

Against Anger, and on the Government of the Paſſions.

Ephe. iv. 26. "Be ye angry, and ſin not."

Since in the ordinary Conduct of human Life, & in the common Affairs of the World, natural Wiſdom teaches, that the only ſure and effectual Means of avoiding GREAT Evils, is the preventing of SMALL Ones, and that the Beginnings of Miſchief are far more eaſily prevented, than the Progreſs of them ſtopped, or the Conſequences of them remedied:

Since under the Improvements of Philoſophy in the Heathen World, the principal and moſt uſeful Precept given Men for the Government of their Paſſions, was, to watch continually & guard againſt the firſt Emotions of Paſſion riſing up in Oppoſition to Reaſon; to ſtop the breaking out of a ſmall and ſilent Stream, which, by Neglect, would ſwell into an overflowing Torrent; - to extinguiſh the firſt Spark of a ſcarce diſcernable Fire, which, by Degrees

ness would prevail into a destroying Conflagration.

Since by the still purer and more refined Precepts of the Doctrine of Christ, we are obliged to govern even our very Thoughts and Desires, to stop against the Temptations and first Occasions of Sin; to lay the Ax to the Roots of the Tree; by suppressing all corrupt Affections, by restraining all inordinate Appetites, by moderating and keeping a strict Hand even over innocent Inclinations; by plucking out, (if need be,) a Right Eye, and cutting off a right Hand:"

Since these things are so, it may, doubtless, seem strange to any One that is not versed in the Jewish Manner of speaking, how St. Paul should come to express himself, after such a sort, as if he intended to indulge Men in letting loose the Reins to their Passions, as far as was consistent with Innocence; & thought it safe to permit Men to allow themselves in the Gratification of their Anger, provided they did but just keep themselves free from the Borders of Sin. — "Be ye angry, and sin not." As if the Bounds between what is excusable & criminal, were marked with so distinct a Limit, that Men might be trusted to discern with ease, when they were at the utmost Limits of their lawful Liberty; or, that it could be supposed Men had so perfect a Command

of themselves, as to be able to stop suddenly at the appointed Mark in a swift Career, and say, (when they please,) to their Passion, "hitherto shalt thou come, and no further." (*)

Our Saviour, (in his divine Sermon upon the Mount,) makes it, in almost every Instance, his peculiar Improvement of moral Obligations under the Gospel; to warn Men against the Approaches and Tendencies towards those Sins, whereof only the gross Acts were forbidden under the Law. — To mention the single One here only to our present Purpose: "Ye have heard that it has been said by them of Old Time, Thou shalt not kill; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, (‡) shall be in Danger of the Judgment; and whoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in Danger of Hell-Fire." This

(*) How difficult is it, never to be angry, but upon a just Cause; and when the Cause of our Anger is just, not to be transported beyond due Bounds, either as to the Degree of our Anger, or as to the Duration and Continuance of it!

(‡) In some of the ancient Copies of this Gospel, these Words of Restriction, *(without a Cause,)* are omitted, and the Declaration is made in the most general Terms; "Whosoever is angry with his Brother, "shall be in Danger of the Judgment:" Men being apt enough of themselves to put in such Restrictions as may be equitably presumed; and there being no need, in the Body of the Law itself, to express such excepted Cases or Limitations, to which, in all Reason and Equity, it may however be supposed the Law cannot extend.

This makes it still more worthy of Inquiry whence it might come to pass, that St. Paul expresses himself upon this Subject in such a Manner as may seem to give some Indulgence to such Degrees of Passion as are not directly sinful ("Be ye angry & sin not,") when yet both by Experience, and the Reason of things, and by our Saviour's express Caution in all Matters of this Nature, it is very evident that Passions indulged to the utmost Bounds of Innocency, are much harder to restrain from entering into sinful Degrees, than it was to prevent their Beginnings, or their arising at first.

That I may give some Solution of a Matter so seemingly difficult, I shall speak to the Words before us, in the following Order:

I. First, I shall show their Import, and how they are really to be understood.

II. What the Kind and Degree of that Anger is, which must be charged as sinful, & how far it may be maintained, as innocent, by the Laws of Christianity.

III. I shall caution against all Excess in it, as if it is not only pernicious, but sinful.

Concluding with such Considerations as may be proper to enforce the due Regulation of it. And,

First, The true Account of this Matter seems to be plainly this. The Words, "Be ye angry," are not a Permission, as they may seem to be, when taken alone; but, according to the Nature and Use of the Jewish Language, they are Part of a single Proposition with those that follow. "Be ye angry, and sin not;" (i.e) Take heed, and beware of sinful Anger: Indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin; or if at any Time ye be provoked, then take particular Care that ye fall not into Sin. For,

Such is the Idiom of the Jewish Language, as to express that in two distinct Propositions, which are to be understood only as one.

There are many other Texts in Scripture, which will confirm this Interpretation; and the comparing them with this, will reciprocally afford much Light towards the true Understanding of them.

In the Old Testament we read, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated." (*) The Propositions are not to be understood asunder, but so be taken together, as one, (thus) "Jacob have I loved more than Esau:" For, God did not intend to express Hatred towards Esau, but only that he loved Jacob comparatively, "with a greater Love."

Thus again — "Fortify thy strong Holds

(*) Mal. i. 2, 3. there

there shall the Sword cut thee off." (*) The Intention is not to exhort Nineveh to fortify herself; but to declare, that howmuch soever she did fortify herself, yet the Sword should cut her off.

So again, - "Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in Pieces." (†) &c. - how much soever ye strengthen yourselves, yet shall ye be broken. Again, I spake not unto your Fathers, nor commanded them, in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt offerings or Sacrifices: but this thing commanded I them saying, obey my Voice." (‡)

The two Parts of this Sentence of the Prophet are not to be taken separately, as if he affirmed that God did not require Burnt offerings at all, (for it is certain he did enjoin and them in most express Words in the Law;) but the Whole is to be understood together, that God did not insist upon Burnt offerings so much as upon Obedience to the Commandments of the moral Law. There is a like Expression of desiring Mercy, and not Sacrifice. (§) The Meaning is not, that God did not require Sacrifice, but that he desired Mercy rather; and (as it follows in the very next Words,) the Knowledge of the Lord, more than Burnt offerings."

(*) Nahum iii. 14, 15. (‡) Isa. viii. 9. (†) Jer. vii. 22.
(§) Hosea vi. 6.

In the New-Testament, the same Manner of Expression, agreeable to the Nature of the Jewish Language, is likewise frequently used; and, it is necessary to be taken notice of, in Order to the true Understanding of them.

"I am not sent," saith our Saviour himself, (discoursing with the Woman of Canaan,) "but to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel" (*). His Meaning is not absolute, (as might seem from the first Part of the Sentence,) that he was not sent at all to any others, than to the Jews only; but, that he was not sent so soon, so immediately, and principally; his Mission was not to be made known so early to any other Nations, as to the "lost Sheep of the House of Israel;" for, that he was also, in the Process of Time, to be "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as to be the Glory of his people Israel," the Prophets expressly declare, as our Saviour himself sufficiently intimated, by immediately granting (after that seeming Refusal,) the Stranger's Request, by healing the Infirmity of her Daughter; and in his Instructions to his Disciples (‡) he speaks with less Obscurity, "Go not into the Way of the Gentiles, but go rather to the lost Sheep of the House of Israel," which afterwards was still more clearly

(*) Matt. xv. 24. (‡) Chap. x. 5.

already expressed by the Apostle (*) "It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to the Jews; but afterwards to the Gentiles."

And thus in the Words before us; "Be ye angry, and sin not:" (i.e) Take heed, and beware of sinful Anger; - Indulge not Anger, lest ye fall into Sin; or, If at any Time ye be provoked, then take particular Care that ye fall not into Sin.

It is the same Caution, as in the Government of all other Passions or Desires, so "use the World, as not abusing it;" - "to rejoice, as tho ye rejoiced not;" - "so weep, as tho ye wept not;" - "so be ye angry, as that ye sin not."

The Meaning of the Words being thus explained, I proceed

II. To show what the Kind or Degree of that Anger is, which must be charged as sinful, and how far it may be maintained as innocent by the Laws of Christianity.

This will best be understood by considering briefly what the Nature and Use of our Passions is, and for what Intent they were implanted in us by our all-wise Creator.

Every Faculty which God hath given us was doubtless given to "profit withal." This

(*) Acts xiii. 46.

This is the Dictate of natural Reason, Revelation also confirming the same. — For,

Neither of them design to annihilate and root out our Passions, but to regulate and govern them; not to destroy their Being, but to restrain their Excess, and to direct and govern them, both as to the Object and Degree. (*) Anger

(*) ——— ——— *Intùs et in jecore ægro*
Nascuntur Domini. ——— ———

Our Passions play the Tyrant in our Breasts. They are occasioned by the View of impending Good or Evil. They are original Parts of the Constitution of our Nature; and therefore to extirpate them, is a mistaken Aim. Religion requires no more of us than to moderate & rule them. For, when they are properly directed, they may be subservient to very useful Ends. They rouse the dormant Powers of the Soul. They are even found to exalt them. They often raise a Man above himself, and render him more penetrating, vigorous and masterly, than he is in his calmer Hours. — Actuated by some high Passion, he conceives great Designs, and surmounts all Difficulties in the Execution. He is inspired with more lofty Sentiments, and endowed with more persuasive Utterance, than he possesses at any other Time. Passions are the active Forces of the Soul. They are its highest Powers brought into Movement and Exertion. But, like all other great Powers, they are either useful or destructive, according to their Direction and Degree. — *Ut Equus ferox, si domas, Usui serviat; aliquin inutilis: ita Affectus, si vincas, Vitæ Dulcedinem promoveant; alioquin perturbant Animum. Ut Ignis et Aqua, si Modum non transeunt, maximè prosunt; violenti autem erumpentes, omnia pervertunt et desolantur: ita Affectus, Ratione victi, plurimum serviunt Hominis Felicitati; effræmati verò, totum Hominem pessundant.* — See No. 408 of the Spectator.

Let us never, therefore, suffer our Courage to exert itself in Fierceness, our Resolution in Obstinacy, our Wisdom in Cunning, nor our Patience in Sullenness and Despair. *Animum*

Anger and Resentment are as natural to the human Mind as Grief & Sorrow, or even as Cold and Hunger are to the Body; and to prevent them belongs neither to the Province nor Power of Reason: In this Respect the Mind is purely passive: This internal Sense is a thing quite distinct from Reason, & hath no Connection with it; it depends not upon Arguments & Choice, but is derived from Nature, (*) and acts, and is acted upon, by Necessity.

It is not, therefore, the supplanting the Passions of

Animum rege: —— —— Qui nisi paret,
Imperat: hunc Frenis, hunc tu compesce Catenâ.
Te si Animum vicissi potius, quàm Animus te, est quod gaudias.

See No. 433. of the Spectator, and also Knox's Essays, No. 121. on the Importance of governing the Temper. — Prudence is an universal Virtue, which enters into the Composition of all the rest, & where she is not, they lose their Name and Nature.

Est Modus in Rebus, sunt certi denique Fines,
Quos ultrà, citràque, nequit consistere rectum.
Omne nocet nimium, mediocritèr omne gerendum.
Est Sapientiæ in Loco humanæ Passiones cohibere, vel uti.
Reprimandæ Cupiditates.

"As the Breath of Heaven saith unto the Water of the Deep, 'This Way shall thy Billows roll, & no other: Thus high, and no higher shall they rise their Fury;' so let thy Spirit, O Man, actuate and direct thy Flesh; so let it repress its Wildness. Thy Soul is the Monarch of thy Frame, suffer not its Subjects to rebel against it. He who gave thee these, gave thee also Reason to subdue them; exert it, and thou shalt trample them under thy Feet."

(*) *Humanum est irasci.* Serm. CXXVI.

of Men, (which God for many wise Ends and Uses hath vouchsafed us,) but only the due Regulation of them, which the Apostle here particularly aims at.

"Be ye angry, and sin not."

What is here said of Anger, may, in a great Measure, be applied to all other Inclinations whatever: They have all their Use. — But,

They are only THEN useful, when they are under the Guidance and Dominion of Reason. When they are suffered to break loose from that State of Subjection, though they promise Pleasure; yet, they always give Pain.

The Art of governing our Passions, therefore, is more useful and important than we may, perhaps imagine; much more useful than many things, in the Search and Pursuit of which we spend our Days. (*)

Without this Art, Riches and Health, and Skill and Knowledge will give but little Satisfaction; Indeed,

(*) *Ut in magno Fluctu non sistitur Navis, nisi Pondus Anchoræ retineat alto infixæ Vado: sic, in magnis Rerum Procellis, summa Ratio debet Animum cohibere, ne ab Affectibus auferatur.*

He is the wise Man, who, tho' not skilled in Science, yet knows how to govern his Passions and Affections: He that can make a Sacrifice of his Will, is Lord of himself. — The utmost Perfection we are capable of in this World, is, to govern our Lives and Actions by the Rules which Nature hath set us, and keeping the Order of our Creation. See Note (‡) Page 157, 158.

deed whatever else we possess, without This we can neither be happy, wise, nor good.

That Anger, then, considered in itself, and upon all Occasions whatever, is unlawful, neither the most rigid Philosophers, nor the severest Christians, have ever been able to prove.

It is One of the Passions implanted in us by Nature.

The first Motions of it seem to be necessary, because natural; the Slowness or Hastiness to it, depending, in great Measure, on the Temper of the Body, and our natural animal Spirits; thus far it is not subject to the Power of our own Will, or to the Subjection of Reason & Religion: It is a Passion, (like all other simple and natural Ones,) capable of serving excellent Purposes, when managed with Sobriety and Discretion. (*)

As it is therefore natural and useful to Men, entirely

(*) The Affections and Passions are not in themselves *evil*, (as some of the ancient Philosophers vainly imagined,) but were implanted in us by the wise Author of all things, for excellent Ends, and good Purposes: that we, (whose mixt Nature of Body and Spirit, would otherwise have made us too remiss in pursuing the Ends, to which bare abstract Reason directed us,) might by the Affections and Passions, under the Regulation of Reason, and subservient to it, (i.e. by reasonable Hopes and Fears, by Love and Hatred, by Anger or Complacency,) be pushed on and excited to be more earnest, constant and diligent in all those Actions of Life, which Reason directs, and the Affections execute.

entirely to baniſh it from our Breaſts, would be an equally fooliſh and vain Attempt: for, as it is difficult, and next to impoſſible, to oppoſe Nature with Succeſs, ſo it were very imprudent, if we had it in our Power, to caſt away the Weapons with which ſhe hath furniſhed us for our Defence. The beſt Armour againſt Injuſtice, is a proper Degree of Spirit, to repel the Wrongs that are done or deſigned againſt us; But, if we diveſt ourſelves of all Reſentment, we ſhall perhaps prove too irreſolute and languid both in reſiſting the Attacks of Injuſtice, and removing thoſe from us, who have committed it: we ſhall therefore ſink into Contempt, and by the Tameneſs of our Spirit, ſhall invite the Malicious to abuſe and affront us. Nor will Others fail to deny us the Regard which is due from them, if once they think us incapable in this. To remain unmoved at groſs Injuries has the Appearance of Stupidity, and will make us deſpicable and mean in the Eyes of many who are not to be influenced otherwiſe than by their Fears.

There is a Tameneſs of Spirit, therefore, which deſerves Cenſure & Rebuke; &, in ſome Caſes, "we even do well to be angry." For,

Admitting Anger, (according to the received Notion of it,) to proceed from an Uneaſineſs and

Diſcompoſure

Discomposure of Mind, upon the Receipt of an Injury, with a Desire of obtaining Satisfaction for it to ourselves, or to those whom we love, both the Honour of God, the Reverence due to the Laws, the Love of Virtue, and the Protection of good Men, may make this not only innocent, but necessary and commendable.

We must not imagine, therefore, that the Command before us was meant to produce Insensibility in us; No, our Creator has endued the human Mind with a Sense of Resentment, as a necessary Means of Self-preservation.

When the Name of God, therefore, his Word and Truth, (things which ought to be most sacred,) are boldly violated, and impiously trampled upon, no good Christian can, none in a public Character should see this done without Indignation, but is obliged sharply to rebuke such Offenders for their daring Wickedness and Folly. (†)

Thus Moses was exceedingly provoked, and "his Anger waxed hot" at the molten Calf which the Israelites had made, to dishonour God and themselves. (*) And

(†) We may not only be angry without sinning, but even sometimes may *sin* in *not* being angry. God, who designed human Society, designed the Good of it; and that Good to be promoted by every Individual to the utmost of his Power. Hereby there is tacitly committed to every Man a Kind of Trust & Guardianship of Virtue, whose Rights he is obliged to support & maintain in Proportion to his Abilities; not only by Example, by Advice and Exhortation, but even by Reproof and Resentment suitable to the Circumstances of the Offender and the Offence. — Whoever therefore can bring himself to a careless and cold Indifference, or calm Unconcernedness in hearing any prophane or impious Discourse, or in beholding any cruel, outrageous, or oppressive Action, becomes in some Measure an Encourager and Abettor of them, and

entirely to baniſh it from our Breaſts, would be an equally fooliſh and vain Attempt: for, as it is difficult, and next to impoſſible, to oppoſe Nature with Succeſs, ſo it were very imprudent, if we had it in our Power, to caſt away the Weapons with which ſhe hath furniſhed us for our Defence. The beſt Armour againſt Injuſtice, is a proper Degree of Spirit, to repel the Wrongs that are done or deſigned againſt us; But, if we diveſt ourſelves of all Reſentment, we ſhall perhaps prove too irreſolute and languid both in reſiſting the Attacks of Injuſtice, and removing thoſe from us, who have committed it: we ſhall therefore ſink into Contempt, and by the Tameneſs of our Spirit, ſhall invite the Malicious to abuſe and affront us. Nor will Others fail to deny us the Regard which is due from them, if once they think us incapable in this. To remain unmoved at groſs Injuries has the Appearance of Stupidity, and will make us deſpicable and mean in the Eyes of many who are not to be influenced otherwiſe than by their Fears.

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When the Name of God, therefore, his Word and Truth, (things which ought to be most sacred,) are boldly violated, and impiously trampled upon,

and makes himself accountable for them in Proportion to his Power of preventing them. And consequently, they who obtain any Degree of Superiority, (whether natural, as that of Parents, or civil, as that of Magistrates and Governors,) are still under more weighty Obligations, not only to note & censure, but even to check & chastise the Irregularities, the Faults & Vices of those under their immediate Care and Inspection. Their Authority is an additional Ground for their Resentment; and their Resentment will greatly enforce their Authority.

Anger manifests itself in so many awful Forms as never fail of affecting the Imagination, and leaving sometimes very memorable Impressions upon the future Lives and Conversations of Men.

(*) Anger is one of those Passions which is occasioned by Surprise; for a Man is not angry at a common thing, and to which he is accustomed: for this Reason, the dearer those are to us, that put us in a Passion, the more violent it is, Serm. CXXVI.

And thus our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, the perfect Pattern of Meekneſs and Patience, is ſaid not only to have grieved, but to have looked "upon the Phariſees with Anger, becauſe of the Hardneſs of their Heart." — And,

As theſe Occaſions, where the Glory of God and the Good of Others are concerned, juſtify ſome Reſentment of this Kind, ſo St. Paul, in the Scripture now before us, ſeems to imply, that they may be warrantable alſo with Regard to private Injuries and Affronts, provided always that due Care be taken to reſtrain their Exceſſes, and to conquer and compoſe them in Time.

A Moderate Reſentment, then, as it is uſeful in its Effects, ſo is it therefore innocent in itſelf, and indeed, oftentimes comendable.

The Virtue of Mildneſs is no leſs remote from Inſenſibility on the one Hand, than from Fury on the other. It implies that we are angry only upon proper Occaſions, and in a due Degree, that we are never tranſported beyond the Bounds of Decency, nor indulge a deep or laſting Reſentment, that we do not follow, but lead our Paſſion; that we govern, but do not ſubmit to be governed by it.

Under theſe Regulations it is certainly excuſable, when moved only by private Wrongs; and, being excited

excited by the Injuries which Others suffer, is becoming a generous Mind, and deserves Commendation.

Shall a good Man feel no Indignation against Injustice & Barbarity? not even when he is Witness to shocking Instances of them? when he sees a Friend basely and cruelly treated; when he observes

"The Oppressor's Wrong, and proud Man's Contumely;
"The Insolence of Office, and the Spurns
"That patient Merit of th' Unworthy takes?"

shall he still enjoy himself in perfect Tranquility? will it be a Crime if he conceives the least Resentment? will it not rather be somewhat criminal if he is destitute of it?

In such Cases, we are commonly so far from being ashamed of our Anger, (as of something mean,) that we are proud of it, and confess it openly, as what we count laudible and meritorious. (*) The

(*) There is a *natural* Anger, and a *spiritual*: the common Object of the first is the Person, of the latter, the Vice. A good Man is never angry but at Sin—and he that is always angry at this, will seldom sin in his Anger. To be angry at Sin, is almost the only justifiable Exercise of this Passion; for it is an Affection so unquiet and turbulent, that if we once give way to it, we are generally unmanned by its Transports. Evils are not remedied but made worse, and the very Anger does us more Hurt, than the Injury we complain of; other Passions rise in us by Degrees, but this flushes all things in a Moment.

The Truth is, — There ſeems to be ſomething manly, and we are bold to ſay, ſomething virtuous in a juſt and well conducted Reſentment.

In the main Time, - Let us not be ſuſpected of endeavouring to vindicate Rage, and Peeviſhneſs, and implacable Severity. No: Such is their Deformity, ſo horrid, and ſo manifeſt are the Evils they produce, that they do not admit of Defence or Juſtification. We condemn, we deteſt them as unnatural, brutiſh, unmanly and monſtrous. All we contend for, is, that it is better to be moderate in our Reſentment, than to ſuppreſs it altogether. Let us therefore keep it under a ſtrict Diſcipline, and carefully reſtrain it within the Bounds which Reaſon preſcribes, with Regard to the Occaſion, Degree, and Continuance of it. But, let us not preſume to extirpate any of thoſe Affections, which the Wiſdom of God has implanted in us, which are ſo nicely balanced, and ſo well adjuſted to each other, that by deſtroying One of them, we may perhaps deſtroy and blemiſh the whole Frame of our Nature.

Anger therefore, though innocent at firſt, (when juſtly provoked,) yet when once we give-way to it beyond the Bounds of Moderation and Reaſon, from thence begins its Sting, and both it, and all its

its Conſequences, are deadly and condemning.

It is therefore very obſervable how this Caution runs, "Be ye angry, and ſin not: let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath, neither give-place to the Devil."

The Manner of which Exhortation plainly argues, that, however, upon ſome Occaſions, and in ſome Degrees, Anger may be lawful, yet, the juſteſt Anger cannot be excuſed, when it continues long.

Although, (as we have already obſerved,) the firſt Motions of our Paſſion may not be under our Check and Juriſdiction - though we deſire, and grieve, and reſent, as naturally and unavoidably as we hunger or thirſt, (*) yet, when that firſt Guſt is over, the governing Part of the Soul may, & ought to interpoſe its Powers; and, by a timely and prudent Care, quell the rebellious Diſturber of our Peace. Allay the Storm we may, and muſt, tho' we could not prevent the firſt Blowing of the Wind; nor the Swelling of the Waves, when it blew.

No Heathen Maſters of Morality ever mention the Peeviſh (‡) without Blame; but, for the Sullen and

(*) Man, that is compounded of Soul and Body, has naturally a Civil War within him. See the middle Part of No. 564 of the Spectator.

(‡) From peeviſh Thoughts your chearful Mind defend,
Nor in raſh Words diſcharge them on a Friend.
Serm. CXXVI.

Moroſe, who feed upon the bitter Morſel, and turn it into Gall, into Wormwood, and Bitterneſs; no Terms of Reproach were ever thought too hard for them:

Much leſs will Chriſtianity endure the harbouring and cheriſhing of any evil Thoughts, - If theſe intrude, we muſt immediately caſt them out, compoſe our Spirits, and return to a peaceful and kind Diſpoſition.

Silent Grudges and Quarrels perpetuated, or induſtriouſly prolonged, can never be conſiſtent with the Obedience of that Maſter, who hath ſo ſolemnly enjoined all his Servants to forgive and love their Enemies. (*)

No Man, therefore, can nouriſh a laſting Anger without living in open Defiance to the Duty he owes both to God and Man, [viz] that of Charity to both. — For,

It is certain, that every One who continues in a State of Enmity and Wrath, commits a Fault which the

(*) "It is much better to reprove, than to be angry ſecretly." It is the Character of an unworthy Nature, to write Injuries in Marble, and Benefits in Duſt. — *Iræ Furor brevis ſit.*

When Anger and Uneaſineſs *immediately* vent themſelves in Words, the Malignity of the Paſſion is ſoon diſcharged: - *Then* it is moſt fatal and pernicious, when the Wound rankles and feſters within, when the Mind preys upon itſelf, without diſcloſing the Subject of its Grievances. "Anger reſteth in the Bolom of Fools."

the highest Provocations can never justify.

Anger, then, may repast with us for a Moment, but not rest with us for a while.

The Continuance of Anger is Hatred: The Continuance of Hatred becomes Malice; that Anger therefore is not warrantable that has suffered the Sun to set on it: "Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath."

Natural Anger may glance, but soon dies in the Breasts of wise and good Men; but rests only in the Bosom of Fools: In the former it is Infirmity; in the latter, Sin. — And,

It is in vain to plead the Unconquerableness of Passion, and a natural Tendency to such vehement Motions; for, at the utmost, the Continuance of Resentment cannot be constitutional. Revenge and Malice are implanted in no Man's Nature. On the contrary, it is observable, that those who are most liable to be transported with sudden Passion, are even by a natural Disposition most easy to be reconciled, to offer afterwards, and to desire Forgiveness. And where from the Constitution of Nature such a Tendency to sudden and impetuous Anger is truly pleaded, there the Consciousness and Acknowledgement of such an Infirmity should make them the more careful to guard "against a

(*) Sinful Anger, when it becomes strong, is called *Wrath*, when it makes Outrages, it is *Fury*, when it becomes fixed, it is termed *Hatred*, and when it intends to injure any One, it is called *Malice*; all these wicked Passions spring from Anger.

" Sin, which doth ſo eaſily beſet them." And doubtleſs, a faithful Attention to Reaſon, under the Direction of a ſerious Regard to Religion, would gradually correct it. — But further,

As thoſe then offend who exceed in this, ſo no leſs thoſe alſo who are " angry without a Cauſe;" who are worked up to all the Extravagancies of Rage & Madneſs for mere Trifles; (*) who are incenſed againſt Brute-beaſts, at things inanimate, and at Croſſes purely accidental, in which there can be no Foundation for Anger: In a Word, who are angry at thoſe things which a good Man would think deſerved his Thanks rather than Reſentment; or a wiſe Man would overlook, as not worth his Notice.

(*) It is the Infelicity of many to break out into the greateſt Paſſion upon the leaſt Occaſion: But it is more Prudence to paſs-by ſmall Offences, than be diſturbed and quarrel for them; for, by the *laſt* we are but even with our Enemy, but by the *firſt* above him. Indeed,

There is no ſurer Mark of a great Mind, than not to be tranſported to Anger by any Accident whatever. The Clouds and Tempeſts are formed below, but all above is quiet and ſerene, which is the Emblem of a brave Man, that maſters all Provocations, and lives at Peace within himſelf. — *Ira ſapiſſimi eſt nihil ad Rem.* So much of Anger, ſo much of nothing to the Purpoſe.

Sermon

SERMON CXXVII.

On the same Subject.

Ephe. iv. 26. "Be ye angry, and sin not."

Having already shown how far Anger may be consistent with the Laws of Christianity, and wherein it becomes sinful, I shall now,

III. Caution you against all Excess in it, from a Consideration of the Mischiefs & Inconveniences of it. — And here,

We cannot but take notice, that even the Heathen Moralists themselves have filled their Discourses with Arguments against irregular and disorderly Passions; drawn from the Indecency and Unseemliness of the thing itself; from the Shame and Indignity of a reasonable Creature's being subject to such unreasonable Slavery; from the Uneasiness of it to Ourselves; from the Injuriousness of it to Others; and from many other Considerations, which prove a Man, who is governed by this Passion, to be incapable of any true Philosophy, incapable of coming up to so much as the moral

Im-

Improvements but of a wiſe Heathen. And, - The Scripture itſelf ſometimes makes uſe of ſuch natural Arguments: - From the Folly of the thing itſelf, as, "Be not haſty in thy Spirit to be angry; for Anger reſteth in the Boſom of Fools," - "A Fool's Wrath is preſently known, but a prudent Man covereth Shame." - "He that is ſlow to Wrath, is of great Underſtanding; but he that is ſoon angry, dealeth fooliſhly." And "He that is haſty of Spirit, exalteth Folly." — Again,

From the Contempt it draws upon Men, who are obſerved to be ſubject to this Weakneſs - As - "He that hath no Rule over his own Spirit, is like a City that is broken down, and without Walls." - From the frequent Miſchiefs it brings upon them - "A Man of great Wrath ſhall ſuffer Puniſhment; for, if thou deliver him, yet thou muſt do it again." And, - "Wrath killeth the fooliſh Man, and Envy ſlayeth the ſilly One." — Alſo,

From the Natural Excellency of the contrary Practice; - "He that is ſlow to Anger, is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City:" - The One ſhewing only Strength of Body, the other of Mind. — But,

To us Chriſtians, there are ſtill higher Arguments to convince us of the Miſchiefs of being governed by

by our Paſſions, and to perſuade us of the Neceſſity of reſtraining them within due Bounds. For Us to indulge our Paſſions, is to deprive ourſelves wholly of that Temper, that Frame and Diſpoſition of Mind, which is the peculiar Character and Obligation of a Chriſtian. If a Philoſopher, if a wiſe Heathen, upon the common Principles of Reaſon and Morality; if a Man, upon the bare Conſideration of the Dignity of his Nature above the Beaſts that periſh, is under Obligation to ſubdue his Appetites and Paſſions to the Standard of Reaſon; how much more is a Chriſtian bound to keep himſelf ſtill under ſtricter and more ſevere Reſtraints? — For,

When a Chriſtian indulges his Paſſion, let him conſider WHO it is, that acts ſo unworthily, and behaves ſo unbecoming? A Man indued with Reaſon and Underſtanding: - A Man whoſe Reaſon is improved, not by Philoſophy only, but moreover by the Knowledge of the revealed Will of God; - a Man for whom Chriſt died; to God has been freely reconciled, and, out of mere Mercy and undeſerved Compaſſion, vouchſafed to turn away his Anger from him. — And,

Againſt whom does he direct the Violence of his Paſſion? Againſt a Man like himſelf? Againſt his Friend, or his Brother; Bone of his Bone, & Fleſh

of his Flesh, One for whom Christ died, (*) as well as for himself, and by his own Blood redeemed them both from Death. — And!

What is it for? Perhaps, for a careless Word, for an undesigned Provocation, or Difference only in Opinion; possibly, for retaining a good Conscience, and not daring to do what the other expects of him; at the most, for some slight and trivial Offence; for not being able to repay him his hundred Pence, when God hath forgiven them both, their ten thousand Talents.

Not that any one Christian may not, in a just and legal Manner, compel another to do what is right and equitable; much less, that Superiors should not by their Authority oblige Inferiors to perform the proper Duties of their respective Stations: But, that in these, and all other Cases, Religion and Equity be the Grounds and Reasons, and not Passion, the Measure of the Compulsion.

If any thing could make exorbitant Passion excusable,

(*) The following Consideration may abundantly serve to teach us to pardon Injuries. The Committers of them must be either *Chosen* or *Reprobate*; if the First, how dare we to hate those, whom God will eternally love? and, if the Other, are not the Flames which will eternally devour them, sufficient to quench our Thirst of Revenge, and all Anger and Passion against them?

excusable, it should seem to be when Vice is the Object of the Displeasure, & Concern for the Honour of God, the Cause of the Commotion. Nevertheless,

Even in this Case, our Saviour himself, when he was not only reviled, but reviled also with Blasphemy against God himself, yet "reviled not again." And Micheal, the Arch-Angel, when contending with the Devil, yet did not bring against him a railing Accusation, but said, "the Lord rebuke thee."

The Scripture accordingly directs, that "a Servant of God must not strive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient; and in Meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth." For, "the Wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Works."

"Let all Bitterness, therefore, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all Malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake, hath forgiven you."

There is a remarkable History to this Purpose in the Book of Jonah, where, upon God's repenting

to execute his Threatnings upon NINIVEH, Jonah was displeased at it exceedingly, "and he was very angry;" and persisted in it, that he did well to be angry, "even unto Death:" But God reproved him by the Similitude of a Goard, at which Jonah was grieved when it perished SUDDENLY; and the Lord said unto him, "thou hadst Pity on the Goard, which came up in a Night, & perished in a Night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great City?"

When once a Man, whatever the Occasion be, gives himself up to his Passion, he is then out of the Use of his Reason, and consequently cannot tell to what Degree of Unreasonableness, it may drive him. "An angry Man stirreth up Strife, and a furious Person will abound in Transgression," as Cain's causeless Displeasure against his Brother, increased by Degrees beyond Limit, till it ended in Murder, so Passion let loose even upon the most just Provocation, will scarcely be prevented till it leads us into Sin.

The Instances of intemperate Anger are as follow.

First, When it breaks out into outrageous Actions; for then, like a boisterous Wind, it quite puts out that Light which should "guide our Feet in the Way of Peace;" it dethrones Reason, and suspends its Exercise.

An

Malice or Revenge of this Kind is the more dangerous, and therefore the more sinful, because, though the Impulse of Passion should meet with no Opposition to inflame it, which however is generally the Case; yet when it has worked the Blood into so violent a Ferment, it is apt of itself to redouble its Forces: and no One can tell what Fury, wound up to the highest Pitch, may produce. A Man is now become the Instrument of his own Passion, and may be driven to act such Tragedies as he could not think of before without Horror. (*)

Great Reason, therefore, have we to implore the Grace of God, that we may not be led so far into this Temptation. The Man, that an Hour before seemed to be guided by a sober Sense of Religion, is now got beyond the Line of Reason, and is seen to break thro all the Restraints of Decency, Humanity, and Virtue, to satiate his Vengeance in the Blood of his Fellow-creatures. A passionate Man is every Moment liable to do That, which he may ever after repent: like the Horse rushes into the Battle, and by a savage and fierce Instinct bearing down all before him; but receiving Wounds, the Pains of which will ever after be felt. For the Pleasure which arises from the gratifying this Passion is but momentary; it is like the Lightning that gilds

(*) Anger is such a headstrong and impetuous Passion, that the Antients call it a short Madness, and indeed there is no Difference between an angry Man and a Madman, while the Fit continues, because both are void of Reason, and blind for that Season. All we can say in favour of it is, prevailing it is less dangerous than confirmed Hatred; it spoils the Face, it agitates the Body, and inflames the Blood, and on that Account is mentioned in the Gospel, threatened

(x) Serm. CXXVII. the

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the Possessed into the Fire or the Water, so it casts us into all Kind of Dangers. It too often ruins or subverts whole Families, Towns, Cities, and Kingdoms. It is a Vice that very few can conceal, and if it does not betray itself by such external Signs, as Paleness of the Countenance, and Trembling of the Limbs, it is more impetuous within, and by gnawing in the Heart, injures the Body and the Mind together.

the Storm, a Flash of Joy, and then all again is overcast, gloomy, and frightful. — But,

2dly, Anger becomes unlawful when it vents itself in unseemly and reviling Language.

It were to be wished that those, who have such a peculiar Delicacy of Feeling when they are affronted, would abstain from all Appearance of an affrontive and disrespectful Behaviour to others; that they who are so quick to receive would be as slow to give an Affront. On the contrary, it often happens that they only feel for themselves; they are not the least sensible of the Indignities offered to others. How frequently do those who are highly enraged pass a general and undistinguishing Censure upon a Man's Character? they allow nothing commendable in it. Contrary to the Rules of candid Artists, whatever is beautiful is either overlooked or thrown into Shades; whatever is deformed, is exaggerated, heightened, and exposed in the fullest Light. And on this View they pronounce Judgment, & "shoot out their Arrows, even bitter Words," little regarding how deep they wound; though frequently, like poisoned Arrows, the Wounds they give, are incurable.

Some indeed are too apt to excuse themselves, and express their Hopes, and imagine that God will forgive

forgive them, because they pretend they are borne away into such extravagant Licences by a sudden Discomposure of Mind, which quite transported them beyond themselves. And it must be allowed that sometimes he who has Virtue very much at Heart may, on a sudden Surprize of Passion, be tempted to "speak unadvisedly with his Lips." But it happens but too frequently that those who put in this Plea, have no Claim to it. For, what if this Passion which they pretend to be a Frailty, should prove really a Fault? And in general it will be found, that haughty opprobrious Language is not so much owing to a Man's sudden Temptations to Anger, as to an inward standing Habit of Contempt, which that occasional Temptation, by throwing him off his Guard, manifested and exposed to View. A secret unsuspected Pride then, the settled Temper of our Minds, may be the original Cause of disdainful and contemptuous Expressions, and a Surprize of Passion only the Occasion of discovering that Temper by such Expressions.

In vain therefore do such Persons seek to screen themselves from Guilt, by resting the Occasion of it on the ungoverned Bursts or unguarded Sallies of Passion, since they habitually encourage another ill Affection of the Mind, which is sure to set their Passion at Work.

As well may the Intemperate complain that they cannot secure themselves against the Attacks of many Distempers from the Weakness of their Constitution, when their Intemperance has been the true Occasion of that Weakness. — But,

3dly, We are not always to judge of the Sinfulness of Anger, only from the open & visible Appearance of it, either in our Words or Actions: it may be concealed and treasured up in our Thoughts, & retain as much Malignity as when it immediately breaks out and discovers itself in contumelious Language, or Acts of outragious Violence: for, by brooding in the Mind, it becomes the Parent of a very untoward Issue, Malice and Hatred.

Malice is a cool deliberate Resentment; but sometimes more keen and malevolent, than that which is rash and precipitate. It is like a massy Stone, slowly raised, but threatning the greater Danger to him on whom it shall fall.

Many are too apt to sooth themselves with the deceitful Thought, that they are Men of Temper and Patience, because, on very great Provocations, they can so far suppress the first Impulse of Passion, as not to betray any strong Symptoms of it; whilst, at the same Time, their Coolness is owing to nothing better than to their Cowardice. The Veil that

that is cast over their Fury, does not alter its real Complexion; it only enables it to act with less Suspicion, and therefore with greater Security at a more proper Opportunity.

The Heat of Anger thus concealed, then, may be as injurious as that which immediately discharges itself, and evaporates in a sudden Flame: But the Guilt of the Malicious is aggravated in this, that he acts with more Deliberation than those of a hot and fiery Temper. He has Time to debate the Matter coolly with himself; to call in the Counsels of Reason and Prudence, and to sue for the Succours of Grace. All this he may do, and ought to do: and if either thro' a wilful Omission of this, or in Despight of all the Remonstrances of Reason and Conscience, he still perseveres in the determined Resolution of executing his wicked Purposes, his Sin, thus heightened with every Circumstance of Presumption, becomes exceeding sinful.

But further, Anger is yet sinful when encouraged in our Thoughts to the Degree of Hatred. For tho' our Resentment, in this View, may not run so high as to suggest any evil Designs of injuring a Man in his Person or Property; or though it should spare, (what it very seldom does spare,) his Reputation, yet still it is apt to cherish an evil Dis-

position towards him. It inclines us to rejoice at the Misfortunes that befal him, or at least to be unconcerned for them; it restrains many Acts of our Benevolence towards him, when it would be equally our own Interest to perform them; indeed, it may turn away our Eyes from him in the Day of his extreme Adversity and Affliction. (*) Now,

It is certain there is no Man, who retains the least Sense of Humanity, but wishes to live in a good Understanding with all Mankind, abstracting from every Consideration but the pleasing Reflection that naturally arises in the Mind from such a Situation. The Reason of this we need not inquire at present: it is enough that every Man feels this SOCIAL Desire so strong in his own Heart.

Why then will any One chuse to practise such a strange Sort of Self-denial as to rob his own Breast of such pleasurable Emotions, for no Reason but to rob his Fellow-creatures of the same? This is not only hindering Good, or, what amounts to the same, doing Evil for Evil's Sake, (the Temper of the most accursed Spirit:) it is yet worse, it is doing Evil to Ourselves for the Sake of doing Evil to Others.

But, "Is it not a Pleasure to us when we rejoice at the Misfortunes of others, and therefore are we not still (it is said) in the Possession of Pleasure?"

A

(*) The Old Age of a very pollished State is generally miserable; when the Vigour of Youth runs high, by Luxury and Dissipation, into Petulancy; This Petulancy, for Want of Variety, becomes habitual, the World falls off from around him, and he is left to devour his own Heart in Solitude and Contempt.

A Pleasure it is, but a Pleasure arising from Passion only; a Pleasure that will not endure the Test of Reason, or the Survey of Reflection; and therefore an unnatural, brutish, and savage Pleasure: all which is evident from hence, that, when Time has in Part obliterated, and at last totally effaced the deformed Image of Hatred, we find a thorough Complacency at the Retreat and final Farewell of so unwelcome a Guest. And this is still further confirmed from the Joy that arises on the Reconciliation of Persons at Variance: — What tumultuous Transports, (think ye,) must have filled the Hearts of Jacob and Esau at their first Interview, when the Current of Brotherly Love had been so long interrupted between them? Take the Account of it in the inimitable Simplicity of scriptural Language.

"And Jacob lifted up his Eyes and looked, and "behold Esau came, and Jacob bowed himself "to the Ground seven Times, until he came near "to his Brother; and Esau ran to meet him, and em-"braced him, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him, "and they wept."

Were ever Revenge, Malice, or Hatred, accompanied with such grateful Sensations, such kindly Overflowings of Joy and Gladness in the Heart? No: Benevolence, on such Occurrences, asserts the

Right of supreme Dominion in the human Constitution, and triumphs over all the Tribe of the unsocial Affections. We are convinced of our Folly in revolting from her gentle Sway to be enslaved by Tyrants, and terrified by Monsters. This Conviction turns our Hearts: which again are softened by a Mixture of Shame and Repentance for our Fault: and now, Joy pouring in upon them, the Joy of being restored to the peaceful Possession of Ourselves, and replaced in the Affection of our Friends, excites those distressful, yet pleasing Agonies, which seek for Relief in the like distressful and pleasing Flow of our Tears.

Do Men ever take delight in being Witnesses of the Quarrels, & Animosities, among either Friends or Enemies? But, on such Occasions as these, when Tears testify the Sincerity of mutual Affection of Hearts reconciled and united, who can so far restrain his Joy as not to "rejoice with those that do rejoice," and at the same Time to "weep with those that weep?"

Thus we find, whenever our Anger rises so high as to stop or drive back the Streams of Benevolence, it throws us into an uneasy, violent, and convulsive State. And hence it appears that the Command of "loving our Enemies," which has been thought "a hard

hard Saying, and impossible to be fulfilled, is really no more, when resolved into its first Principles, than binding us be at Peace with ourselves; which we cannot be, so long as we continue at Enmity with Others. The Command is not less agreeable to the true Spirit of Morality than it is to that Love and Charity which breathes through all the Gospel.

The Rule then is One, and may without Difficulty be universally understood by all Men; but the Application infinite, and must be made by every One for his own Case in particular.

Every Man knows, when he considers seriously with himself, that his Anger then becomes a sinful Passion, when it ariseth without just Cause; or, upon any Cause vents itself in unbecoming Effects, when it spoils his Temper by frequent Returns; or by its Violence exposes him to undue Transports; or by its Continuance degenerates into Hatred and Malice; when its Height is disproportionate to the Occasion that raised it, or unbecoming the Character of the Person provoked; or the Circumstances in any wise contrary to Right-Reason and Religion. Which Causes, tho' they are, indeed, infinitely various, and, therefore, cannot be expressed in any methodical Direction; yet, because the Rule, (as already observed,) is but one and unchangeably the

same; therefore, the Application in Practice is always easy: Easy, (we say,) to be understood, that a Man is THEN always to look upon his Passion as sinful, when it either puts him beside the Use of his Reason, or upon acting any thing contrary to it; but not always so easy to be PRACTISED; because habitual Passions are exceeding apt to surprize Men, and will not be prevented, but by a constant Guard.

The Means to prevent it, will be Subject of the next,

Sermon

SERMON CXXVIII.

On the same Subject.

Eph. iv. 26, "Be ye angry, and sin not."

The Means to prevent Anger (to be the Subject of the present Discourse) are,

First, Whenever a just Cause of Resentment is given, let us be careful not to exceed in the Measure of it, nor cherish a Passion deeper and fiercer than the Offence can justify.

This is the more requisite because there is no Passion, but what has, of itself, a Tendency to run into Excess. For, all Passion implies a violent Emotion of Mind: of Course, it is apt to derange the regular Form of our Ideas, and to produce Confusion within. On no Occasion, let us imagine, that Strength of Mind is shown by Violence of Passion. This is not the Strength of Men, but the Impetuosity of Children. True Strength of Mind is shown in governing and resisting Passion, not in giving it Scope; and acting, on the most trying Occasions, according to the Dictates of Conscience, and temperate Reason.

Above

Above all, let us beware, & not be angry without a Cauſe; for, if we are, we thereby commit Sin: (*) Cauſeleſs Anger, and Anger in Exceſs, are highly offenſive to Almighty God, we being "in Danger of Judgment" for it, as God himſelf expreſsly declares, (‡) nor can even the moſt ſolemn Sacrifice atone for it without Repentance, it being ranged in the Catalogue of the moſt horrid & trying Sins.

Let us therefore obviate the firſt Motion to this angry Paſſion; - If we cannot reſiſt the FIRST, we ſhall be far leſs able to with-ſtand its increaſing Force; for the ſame Difficulty which in the Beginning might have been ſurmounted, is greater in the End. — Beſides,

What great Contradiction is there between ſuch exceſſive Fierceneſs of Paſſion, and the true Temper of the Chriſtian Religion.

This above all things, labours to inſpire Peace and Good-will, Love and Tenderneſs, Meekneſs and mutual Reſpect: Virtues theſe that make Society uſeful, & Converſation ſweet and eaſy. — But,

Theſe can never conſiſt with thoſe fretful and fiery Diſpoſitions which flame out into Paſſion upon

(*) "A Fool's Wrath is preſently known." — "He that is ſoon angry dealeth fooliſhly." — "Be not haſty, therefore, to be angry, for Anger reſteth in the Boſom of Fools."

(‡) *Iraſcentes edit Condito Olympi.*

in every Circle; (*) and, where fully provoked, not to go beyond Measure. (‡) "If therefore ye have bitter Strife and Envyings in your Hearts, glory not, and lye not against the Truth; This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish;" "The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God;" for there is in it neither Pleasure, nor Profit; neither Honour, nor Security: but contrary wise, it is a sure Mark of Incivility and Want of Decorum, (†) of a rough and unhewn Spirit, not as yet reduced from its natural Ferocity, nor polished by Education, nor made gentle by civil Converse. — But,

What aggravates these Excesses in Passion, is, the manifest Injustice of them. (§) He

(*) *Rixantur de Lanâ caprinâ. — Dedecet Viros muliebriter rixari.* See No. 197 of the Spectator.

(‡) Great Threatnings are like great Winds, they blaster much, but soon end: Many and great Words are manifest Signs of a cowardly Heart; for Reason subsides Passion, and speaks much in little.

Canes timidi vehementiùs latrant, quàm mordent.

Courage and Resolution come to a speedy Issue.

(†) Some Persons are *above* our Anger, Others *below* it; to contend with our Superiors is Indiscretion; and with our Inferiors is Indignity. Clemency is profitable for all; it does well in private Persons, but is more beneficial in Princes; & gives Pleasure upon Reflection.

(§) *Ut qui clausis Oculis obambulat, haud satis progreditur; ita, qui*

He that is driven to act by the Furiousness of Anger (*) measures not the Actions of another by the true Standard of Equity, but purely by Resentment. — For,

Self being at the Bottom of all his Indignation, the Crime hath but little Concern in the Matter. (†) Nothing

indomitis Affectibus ducitur, ex omni Re pericitatur! Ut Civitas sub Damni accipit ab intestinis Seditionibus, quàm ab Hostium extremis: ita ipse leditur Homo Cupiditatibus intrà dominantibus, quàm sævissimæ Fortunæ Ictibus extrà impulsis.

(*) *Ut impetuosa Flumina nullo Obice impedita, rapidè feruntur: ità indomiti Affectus non sibibiti Ratione, quò vult Cupiditas, præcipitantur.*

Ut Navis Pelago jactata, quo Venti agunt, fertur: ità, Homo Cupiditatibus, quò illæ jo vocant, impetu ruit. — Do nothing in Anger, for that is like putting to Sea in a Storm.

... sed absenti Amico commisit, ut Supplicium exigeret, veritus, ne se Iræ Impetus, quò non decoret, impelleret; sibi diffisus est Philosophus, sentiens Animi Commotionem.

Nihil Homo iratus rectè potest intelligere; ulciscendi enim Aviditas Judicium obruit. Quæcunque Irâ commoti faciunt Homines, ea necessariò Extortas fatebuntur: Nec enim fieri potest, ut pronuncient Irâ, Ratione utatur. Sapiens cum irascitur, non irascitur, cum lætatur non superbit.

"A furious Man cannot be justified, for the Sway of his Fury shall be his Destruction."

Of all Passions there is none so extravagant and outragious as that of Anger; other Passions sollicit and mislead us; but this hurries us away by Force, as well to our own, as to another's Ruin; and indiscriminately discharges itself upon the innocent as well as the guilty; and makes the most trivial Offences as heinous: It allows neither Time nor Means of Defence; it admits of no Mediation, but arraigns without Judgement, and condemns without Hearing.

When

Nothing is to appear to be, when we are under the Power of Passion. The Judgment which we then form, can be in the least depended upon as sound or true. The Fumes which arise from a Heart boiling with Rage, never fail to darken the Understanding. Every Passion justifies itself, and brings a thousand Pretences to its Aid to hide its Deformity; and possesses a Sort of Power by which it can magnify or diminish Objects as Pleases, and transform the Appearance of every thing within its Sphere. (*)

The most inconsiderable Point of Interest or Honour, swells into a momentous Object, and the slightest Attack seems to threaten irremediable Ruin. But, after Passion or Pride has subsided, we look round in vain for the mighty Mischiefs we dreaded. The

When any one's Misbehaviour, therefore, disturbs us, we should dismiss the Image of the Injury, and enquire whether we ourselves have not been guilty of the same Fault. Such a Reflection will quickly make us cool, and come to Temper; especially if we consider that the Offender is not altogether his own Man, but under the Force of some outward Passion or other. We should do well therefore, if we can, to step in to the Rescue, and free him from the Thrall of his Disorder.

(*) Malice seldom wants a Mark to shoot at.

Quodlibet in vitia ingenium ruit unicum bonum.

Jamque Faces et Saxa volant, furor arma ministrat.

—— —— Mores mille nocendi.

He that is driven to act by the Furiousness of Anger (*) measures not the Actions of another by the true Standard of Equity, but purely by Resentment. — For,

Self being at the Bottom of all his Indignation, the Crime hath but little Concern in the Matter. (‡) Nothing

indomitis Affectibus ducitur, ex omni Re periclitatur. Et Civitas illi Dæmoni acripit ab intestinis Rebellionibus, quàm ab Hostibus externis: ità ipse leditur Homo Cupiditatibus intrò dominantibus, quàm sævissimæ Fortunæ Ictibus extrà impulsis.

(*) *Ut impetuosa Flumina nullo Obice impedita, rapidè feruntur: ità indomiti Affectus non exhibiti Rationi, quò velit Cupiditas, præcipitantur.*

Ut Navis Pelago jactata, quæ Venti agunt, ferta: ità, Animi Cupiditate [illegible] huc.

(‡) *Plato, iratus Servo, non instanter dimisit, sed absenti Amico commisit, ut Supplicium exigeret, veritus, ne se Iræ Impetus, quò non deceret, impelleret; sibi diffisus est Philosophus, sentiens Animi Commotionem.*

Nihil Homo iratus rectè potest intelligere; ulciscendi enim Aviditas Judicium obruit. Quæcunque Irâ commoti faciunt Homines, ea necessariò Enormitas sequitur: Non enim fieri potest, ut recusetur Irâ, Ratione utatur. Sapiens cum irascitur, non irascitur, cum lapidatus suis superbit.

"A furious Man cannot be justified, for the Sway of his Fury shall be his Destruction."

Of all Passions there is none so extravagant and outragious as that of Anger; other Passions sollicit and mislead us; but this hurries us away by Force, as well to our own, as to another's Ruin; and indiscriminately discharges itself upon the innocent as well as the guilty, and makes the most trivial Offences as heinous: It allows neither Time nor Means of Defence; it admits of no Mediation, but arraigns without Judgement, and condemns without Hearing.

When

Nothing in Life appears to be, when we are under the Power of Passion. No Judgment which we can form, can be in the least depended upon as sound or true. The Fumes which arise from a Heart boiling with Rage, never fail to darken the Understanding. Every Passion Justifies itself, and brings a thousand Pretences to its Aid to hide its Deformity; and possesses a Sort of Power by which it can magnify or diminish Objects as Pleases, and transform the Appearance of every thing within its Sphere. (*)

The most immoderate Pain or Joy, Sorrow or Honour, swells into a momentous Object, and the slightest Attack seems to threaten Ruin. But, after Passion or Pride has subsided, we look round in vain for the mighty Mischiefs we dreaded. The

When any one's Misbehaviour, therefore, disturbs us, we should dismiss the Image of the Injury, and call to Mind how often we ourselves have not been guilty of the same Fault. Such a Reflection will quickly make us cool, and come to Temper; especially if we consider that the Offender was not altogether his own Man, but under the Force of some outward Passion or other. We should do well therefore, if we can, to step in to the Rescue, and free him from the Chains of his Bondage.

(*) Malice seldom wants a Mark to shoot at.

Quidlibet in alios audet Livor.

Jamque Faces et Saxa volant, Furor Arma ministrat.

—— —— *Mores mille nocendi.*

The Fabric, which our disturbed Imagination had reared, totally disappears. But, tho' the Cause of Contention vanishes, its Consequences remain. We have alienated a Friend; We have embittered an Enemy; and sown the Seeds of future Suspicion, Malevolence, or Disgust.

Let the Knowledge of this, place us continually on our Guard, and let the Remembrance of it be ever at Hand to check the extravagant Judgments which we are apt to pass in these Moments of Delusion. (*)

Let us listen to no Suggestion which then arises; nor form any Conclusions on which to act; as we may assume ourselves that every thing, in this State, is beheld thro' a false Medium. In a little While, the Illusion will vanish, and things will clear up around us, and Objects will then be seen in their just Dimensions.

Let us, therefore, suspend our Violence for a Moment, when Causes of Discord occur. Let us anticipate that Period of Coolness, which, of itself, will soon arrive. Let us allow ourselves to think what little Prospect we have of gaining by fierce Contention; and how much of the true Happiness of Life we are certain of loosing by it. — But further,

Another Dissuasive against Proneness to Anger, is,

*. See the Note, page 148.

in the Uncertainty to what Length it may carry us. (t)

By Anger Men are often excited to Acts of the most atrocious Nature, beyond what their Imagination could first conceive; "Death and Destruction are too often before them, only because they have not known the Way of Peace." None of the social Duties, nor of the Virtues of a good Life can be practised by them in this their State; for, "the very Foundations of the Earth are out of Course" with them, and God and Providence are indiscriminately arraigned. — But,

If the evil Habits which the Soul contracts in this World, whilst united to the Body, continue after its Separation from it, (as we have all the Assurance they will,*) then, a Mind thus always discomposed, must be very unfit for the Society of Spirits who have no such turbulent Passions, & for a Place in the Mansions of Love and Peace; from which therefore it will be forever excluded: as "all things that either hurt or offend will be gathered out of the Kingdom of God."

These are some of the ill Effects and pernicious Consequences of sinful Anger; whence it is evident, that if we value our Safety, Ease, or Reputation here, or our eternal Happiness hereafter, we must

(t) It is reported of a certain great Man that his Servants used to put themselves in his Way when he was angry, because he was sure to recompence them for any thing he made them suffer. This is the Record of a pallionate Man's Life: he contracts Debts in his Passion which his Virtue obliges him to pay. He spends his Time in Outrage and Acknowledgment, Injury and Reparation.

(*) See Vol. vi. Page 322.

must fix ourselves against it; (*) to bring it into due Subjection, which we can no better do, than by carefully observing, and putting in Practice the few following Remedies, which I shall now lay before you.

First, Let us call-in to our Assistance some more direct and particular Considerations. — As,

1st, It is very weakly objected by some, that it is not in their Power to withstand and quell the outrageous Assaults of Passion.

This may be very true, if they have taken no Pains for that Purpose. Our Passions are naturally of the unruly Kind; and in Order to bring them under due Command, much Labour and not less Skill and Management are required. And it would not be amiss, perhaps, if a Man were to prescribe a particular Course of Discipline over each of them in their Turn; during which Time, besides a general Regard, they should demand his especial and most particular Care. This seems to have been the Method of a renowned Emperor; renowned, not more for his admirable Government of the Roman Empire, than for the equally admirable Government of himself.

(*) If we be naturally prone to Anger, we should frequent the Company of the Patient; by this Means, without any Labour, we shall attain to a due Disposition: for Conversation is of great Moment; Manners, Humours, nay Opinions are hereby insensibly communicated.

himself. (*) And if the Order of his Meditations was guided by that of his Practice, it is not unreasonable to think, that he began his Home-Regulation by acquiring a Gentleness of Behaviour and a Freedom from Passion. — Now,

If nothing of this Kind hath been attempted by those who are so ready to complain of their Infirmities, as if they took a secret Satisfaction in them; all that we can collect from their Complaints is, that in Effect "they charge God foolishly;" they charge That on his Workmanship, which is owing to their own gross Negligence. — But,

Notwithstanding all this, it is almost impossible for them not to recollect some Occasions, when, upon the Foresight and Expectation of some quarrelsome and litigious Interview, they have resolved to be upon their Guard; and, by such Resolution, fore-closed and stopped up every Inlet of extravagant Passion. They must recollect likewise some other less guarded Seasons, when they suffered themselves to be borne away with the Tempest of Rage, (and

(*) It is reported of Cæsar, that as soon as his Passion began to kindle, he would suppress it, by repeating the Letters of the Greek Alphabet to himself. — It was also a good Method observed by Socrates in this Case; Whenever he found himself in any Disposition to Anger, he would check it by speaking low, in Opposition to the Motion of his Displeasure. There is nothing said or done in Wrath, but might be better said or done in Meekness; and therefore some have advised that, when we are angry, we should stop and repeat the Lord's Prayer, and perhaps by the Time we have passed those Words, "Forgive us as we forgive them that trespass against us," our Anger may cease. See the concluding Letter in No. 228, of the Spectator.

(and were thereby betrayed into the greatest Indecencies;) and, upon cool Reflection afterwards, they were almost as angry with themselves for their Indiscretion in letting loose the Reins of their Fury. A virtual Confession this, that it was owing to their own Neglect, in not seasonably setting a Watch "before the Door of their Lips;" and by that Precaution, holding their Tongues, "as it were with a Bridle."(*)

"God certainly did not give us Reason, that distinguishing Prerogative of our Nature, that Candle which he hath lighted up in our Breasts, to be blown out with every accidental Gust of Passion; to be as a "Reed shaken with every Wind, and broken down by any strong One. Either we have strong Passions, or we have not: if we have not, we derive from Nature that happy Composure of Temper, and that Absence of revengeful Thoughts, which others must take great Pains to acquire by all the Helps of Religion and Philosophy; and therefore "we, who are strong, ought to be more ready to bear with the Infirmites of the weak." If we have strong, vigorous, and warm Passions, then those Sparks are capable of inflaming the Soul with a strong Desire of attaining, and giving it a Kind of additional Life and Spirit actually to attain, every thing

thing that is great, worthy, and honourable. The Passions are the Wings that enable us to rise above every thing that is despicable, low, and earthly; and therefore should dispose us to contemn, or more easily to conquer, every thing that lies in our Way to the most exalted Wisdom and most sublime Virtues. In short, It may not be in our Power always to speak and act so well as we might wish, for Want of Abilities and Opportunities; but it is always in our Power to forbear acting or speaking. Therefore, Secondly, Let us oppose early the Beginning of Passion. As soon as we find the Tempest rising, let us have Recourse to every proper Method, either of allaying its Violence, or of escaping to a calmer Shore: (*) Let us hasten to call up Emotions of an opposite and peaceful Nature: Let us resolve neither to speak to, nor answer the Person who excites our Ill-Humour; but stay till we find it subsiding, and then speak deliberately: (†) Let us endeavour to be cool and steady upon all Occasions, the Advantages of which are innumerable. It may be acquired by Care and Reflection; if it could not, that Reason, which distinguishes Men from Brutes, would be given us to very little Purpose.

Above

(*) *Nulla cruentis Homicidia latet in Armis.*

(†) See the Practice of Cæsar and Socrates in this Case, in Note (*), Page 161.

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(*) Most of this unhappy Make, more frequently than others, expect that their Friends should bear with their Infirmities, but their Friends in Return should defire them to correct and strive against their Infirmities; the common Excuse that they cannot help it, that it is soon over, and that they harbour no Malice in their Heart, are Arguments to pardon a Brute, but will not be sufficient to apologize for an intellectual Savage. Who can venture into Society with a Man that may do us so much Mischief the next Minute, which he can never repair? Such a Man may be feared, he may be pitied, but he cannot be loved.

thing that is great, worthy, and honourable. The Passions are the Wings that enable us to rise above every thing that is despicable, low, and earthly; and therefore should dispose us to contemn, or more easily to conquer, every thing that lies in our Way to the most excellent Wisdom & most sublime Virtues.

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2dly, Let us oppose early the Beginning of Passion. As soon as we find the Tempest rising, let us have Recourse to every proper Method, either of allaying its Violence, or of escaping to a calmer Shore: (*) Let us hasten to call up Emotions of an opposite and peaceful Nature; Let us resolve neither to speak to, nor answer the Person who excites our Ill-Humour, but stay till we find it subsiding, and then speak deliberately: (†) Let us endeavour to be cool and steady upon all Occasions, the Advantages of which are innumerable. It may be acquired by Care and Reflection; if it could not, that Reason, which distinguishes Men from Brutes, would be given us to very little Purpose.

Above

(*) *Nulla cruentatis Homicidia latat in Armis.*

(†) See the Practice of Cæsar and Socrates in this Case, in Note (*), Page 161.

Above all things, we should never go into Company while the Fit of Ill-humour is upon us; for, instead of the Companies diverting us in these Moments of our Discomposure, we shall most probably displease, if not disturb them; and, of Course, shall part worse Friends than we met. In Fits of Sullenness, Contradiction, or Testiness, it will be in vain to seek for a Cure abroad: Let your Humour ferment at Home, and let us compose it in the best Manner we can by Business, or otherwise (if more agreeable) in innocent Mirth and Pleasure: Let us never account any thing small or trivial, which is in Hazard of introducing Disorder into our Frame, and of gaining perhaps such Progress in Time as to threaten entire Dominion.

3dly, In Order to the due acquiring & performing of this, Let us call to Mind a whole Sect of Philosophers, (*) with their Followers, who, by the mere Power of Discipline, (enforced purely by Considerations drawn from the Dignity of human Nature, Self-Repose, & Benevolence to Mankind,) entirely suppressed all the disorderly Ferments of Passion, and that on the most trying Occasions.

Now, for certain, a Disciple of Jesus Christ should blush to observe, that the weak and beggarly Elements of Philosophy should have empowered the

(*) The Stoicks. Espousers

[illegible] more sublime Principle, the Practice of any Virtue than the divine Precepts of the holy Scriptures: those Scriptures which so strongly enjoin and encourage the Practice of the Meekness and Gentleness from the most engaging and interesting Motives, has which exhibit the most perfect Pattern of them in our Lord and Master; who left it too as the distinguishing Mark of his true Disciples, that they "should love one another:" those Scriptures, which will render him that reads them with a proper Disposition, "thoroughly furnished for every good Work;" with a Disposition influenced by the Holy Spirit which will "lead us into all Truth," & incline us to all Goodness. But

It is with Religion as it is with Government; the best Constitution of Government, ill administered, will not produce such salutary Effects as a bad one, whose Laws are duly enforced.

It would be too long, in this Place, to enter into a Detail of the Reasons why the Practice of Christians falls so short of their Principles.

To save the Honour of our holy Religion, as profane, tho' it only be observed, (what is greatly to the Dishonour of Mankind,) that a wrong Principle, if it meets with a strong Opposition, will often carry Men further in Support of it than One that is

grounded on ſound Reaſon and true Religion, if left to aſſert its own Liberty, & meeting with no Controul. The Stoics thought all the Paſſions abſolutely evil; and we have a Sect among ourſelves that look upon Anger in general in the ſame Light.

The Inference we ſhould draw from their greater Strictneſs and Severity in Practice, is this; that we ought to poſſeſs our Minds with a ſtrong Affection, a fervent Zeal, I had almoſt ſaid with a Paſſion, for our Religion. In vain do we boaſt of the Purity of it, either in This or any other Reſpect, if we ſee ourſelves outdone in Practice, either by the Heathens, or thoſe who hold the Truth of it in Unrighteouſneſs. That our Religion is moſt fit to inſpire a true Temper of Meekneſs and Humility, and of every other Virtue, we cannot doubt; it has been tried in the Times of Perſecution, and (like "Gold purified in the Fire,") has appeared with greater Splendor, and ſtill retained its intrinſic Worth. Unworthy are we of the Bleſſing of Deliverance from that dreadful State, if a Security from Danger ſhall encourage a Licentiouſneſs of Life: rather let the Conſideration of that ineſtimable Bleſſing, as it is a very rational, be a ſtanding and effectual Motive in our Hearts of the more punctual Performance of every Duty, now become ſo practicable and eaſy. — Again, Let

Let us endeavour to acquire a Greatness of Mind. By this we do not mean Arrogance, for that betokens a little Mind, a Mind that can resign from nothing within itself that looks great, except Arrogance: but, a true Greatness of Mind arises from a true Judgment of things, and a noble Ascendency of the Soul, inclining us to act above what is barely our Duty; it is rising to the Sublime in Virtue.

This will create a Reverence for ourselves, and will set us as far above the mean Gratification of giving any real Occasion of Passion to others, as of being susceptible of it when an Occasion may be given to us.

We see how often Children, upon the most frivolous Grounds, kindle into Fury, and fall into Fits and Agonies; we see it, but do not think it worth our Notice, much less our Provocation. And how often do we see Men copying after this Example on Occasions altogether as unmomentous?

A Man of a superior Turn of Mind pays an equal Regard to both, in Proportion as they make themselves hereby less than Children.

One of the Ancients said, that he had gained one Advantage from Philosophy, that it had brought him to wonder at nothing. But it looks as if we, the Generality of us, were Strangers in the World,

we are ever expressing our Surprize and Wonder at every thing; and this Surprize prepares the Way for Passion. We wonder that we should meet with such a Behaviour, such a Treatment, such an Affront; whereas the greatest Wonder is, that we should wonder at it. A Man of sound Judgment soon takes such a Survey of Mankind, that he expects many Occurrences of that Sort. He expects to meet with Haughtiness from the Proud, Contempt from the Rich, Ill-manners from the Vulgar, both great and small, foolish Talking and Impertinence from the Ignorant and Conceited: he is prepared to meet with all this, and therefore no Way disconcerted when he does. He has reached a very excellent Point in Wisdom, he has learned to be unconcerned at the Follies of Mankind; to be unconcerned, because they are Follies. With an erect and vigorous, but calm and considerate Resolution, he advances in the High-road of Virtue; and, like One of the Persian Nobles, thinks it beneath his Wisdom and Dignity to stop short, and turn about to gaze at any thing. He is placed in an upper Region, out of the Reach of all the Clouds, Vapours, and Exhalations that infest the Atmosphere of the Earth. The very Suspicion that a Man is despised, betrays a Consciousness of his own Littleness and Inferiority; but

but a Man of truly great Mind thinks, and very reasonably thinks, every Man that despises him below Him. He will rise so high, as to do a good Office to, or bestow a Favour on the Man that has injured him; as considering his Adversary thus thereby doing himself more Injury, and that if he does not by this Means overcome him, he will at least make him ashamed of his Enmity and Opposition. — But,

To this Greatness of Mind, (i.e) of the real and true Estimate of things, let us add an humble & modest Opinion of our own Deserts; for Pride, above all things, renders Men quickly provoked, and implacable when they are so: so says the Wise Man, "only by Pride cometh Contention; but with the well-advised is Wisdom."

The meek, (*) the considerate, and religious are calm

(*) Meekness is, (as Aristotle hath defined it,) a due Mean between Tameness and Stupidity on the one Hand, and Rage and Fury on the other. It is not entire Freedom from Passion, but such a Command over it, as to prevent our being transported beyond the Bounds of Humanity and good Sense. It is this Virtue which, if it does not give a Man such a glaring and shining Figure, as some other good Qualities, yet constitutes the most lovely, beautiful, & agreeable Character, and gains unenvied Praise. If it does not draw the Eyes of the World so much upon its Possessor, & attract our Admiration as some other Accomplishments, yet nothing endears us more to the Affection of Mankind than the "Ornament of a meek and quiet Spirit."

Serm. CXXVIII.

calm & cool, not hastily inflamed, nor at any Time outragious, but consider whether they can do more Good by openly resenting an Offence and punishing the Offender, than by overlooking it and passing it by. It is a Rule with such, never to say or do any unkind thing, except when there is some Necessity for it, either with Regard to themselves or the Public. And, the Reason is: Where there is no Cause for Severity, (i.e) when no valuable and desireable End can be compassed by it, there is always a Reason against it; "it is an unnecessary and useless Severity." Indeed, we cannot even see a Person in Pain, though we do not give it, without feeling, in some Measure, what we see.

As soon as any Affront is offered, it is the Language of Passion, "Such an Indignity is not to be borne! Such an Offence is intolerable! it would be Tameness not to punish it." But, if calm Reason might put in its Plea, it would say, "What Benefit do you propose to yourself? Do you take vindictive Measures merely to gratify your exorbitant Passion, a turbulent Incendiary in your Breast; which is a greater Enemy to your Peace than any you have? Or is it your Intention to reform the injurious Person; to promote the Welfare of Society and your own?" — Again,

A

A Man of a meek Temper will distinguish between a Man's general standing Sentiments, when he is perfectly calm and undisturbed, and his occasional Sentiments, when his Spirits are ruffled and over-heated. He will consider what he is for a Constancy towards him, and what he may be now and then, when some cross Accident may have soured his Temper, or some Passion clouded and disturbed his Reason. And such a Consideration is absolutely necessary to preserve Friendship, and to keep up Peace and Harmony among those that live constantly or converse often together. No Union could be lasting if every thing that was occasionally let fall, should be gathered up and circulated with the Additions which are generally made by officious and sometimes malicious Intermeddlers. Unkindly Thoughts, which vent themselves in unfriendly Expressions, may be only occasional Visitants which stay but an Hour; whereas tender and endearing Sentiments of us may be the constant and welcome Inhabitants of the Mind. A meek Man will never break off any Intimacy with a Friend upon the Account of some angry Reflexions unsuitable to his general habitual Way of thinking; he will consider it is impossible to maintain a friendly Intercourse without making proper and becoming Allowances

for such Infirmities. (*) And, he who says or thinks he has discharged every Duty, without any Failure in Point of Kindness & Friendliness to his Domestics and near Neighbours, has forgot one Duty in Respect of himself, that of Self-Examination: for the least recollection will serve to shew that he has sometimes, to Persons near him or about him, said or done things that had better been left unsaid or undone; and has omitted to do kind things which ought to have been done; that he has been out of Humour sometimes, when there was not sufficient Reason to be so, and has gone too far when there was. A Man of a gentle Nature will therefore make proper Abatements, and be inclined to think that, as a generous Enemy may sometimes, through a Flash of good Humour and an extraordinary Flow of Spirits, say a handsome thing in our Behalf, and deviate into Praise; so a firm Friend, though a Surprize of Ill-humour, may put on an angry Look, or drop a disobliging Expression.

And whereas, a hasty Temper is immediately for proceeding to Extremities, a meek Temper goes more leisurely to work, and consults the softest Season of Address to advise with a Man: "perhaps he has not said it; and, if he have, that he say it no more."

(*) *Amor, et Melle et Felle est fœcundissimus.*
Serm. CXXVIII.

Love, Friendship, without such a Procedure, all Friendships would be precarious; they would be at the Mercy of every One that was malicious enough to do us an ill office. Again,

A meek Man will never be angry with a Person for telling him what he imagines to be a Fault in him, provided it be done in a private Manner, and the Advice be conveyed in the most palatable Vehicle. For should the Fault be purely imaginary, and the Censure wrongly directed, yet, no Harm is done, and he will be obliged to his friendly Adviser for his good Intentions; but if the Censure should fall in the right Place, he will be doubly obliged to him, both for his good Intentions and for the real Good he hath done him, by shewing him to himself, and putting it in his Power to make himself better by correcting his Mistakes.

When a Friend gives us to understand that he has our Interest at Heart, this opens all the Avenues to our Minds; strengthens and enforces his Admonitions; so that they never fail to make deeper Impressions upon us than the most masterly Strokes of written Morality. We consider the Author as influenced by a Motive of doing Good in general, whereas the Friend is actuated by a Concern for us in particular; and this gives a considerable Weight

to his Advice. They who speak affectionately and sincerely from their own Hearts, generally speak affectionately and powerfully to the Hearts of others. And the plain Language of an open Heart, a frank and undesigning Breast, sooner stamps Conviction upon the Mind, than the well-turned Periods and artificial Ornaments of the finest Orator that ever lived. — Again,

A Man of a meek Spirit is glad to be reconciled to the Person who has offended or injured him; and therefore is ready to hearken to all Overtures of Accommodation.

When he who hath made himself an Adversary, comes and accosts him with the Salutation of Jehu to Jonadab:" Is thy Heart right, as my Heart is with thy Heart? if it be, give me thy Hand;" he answers with Jonadab, "It is," and as freely gives him his Hand. He receives him with open Arms, as a Friend returning from a strange Country. Indeed, when a Man sits in Judgment on a Cause between himself and us, and gives Sentence in our Favour what can we desire more? The Offence was the Effect of Passion, – the Acknowledgment is the Result of Reason. To appease our Passion he has made a Sacrifice of his own; & shall we not accept the Offering, but sacrifice our Reason, and even

our

and Humility, to our Faults. Such an humble Demeanour, one would think, should bring down even the "high Looks of the Proud;" because he finds his Adversary has done what he himself thinks the most difficult of all things to be done; he has divested himself of Pride.

A meek Man, on such Occasions, will call to Mind the Command of our Saviour, "If thy Brother trespass against thee seven Times in a Day, & seven Times in a Day return unto thee, saying, I repent, forgive him." A Command that carries with it two Suppositions, either of them sufficient to subdue the most stubborn and unrelenting Heart:

"If thy Brother trespass against thee seven Times in a Day," - a sad Intimation of the hourly Infirmities which human Nature is liable to, an Object of our Pity, tho we were not "in the same Condemnation;" but as we are, and he is our Brother, the Sense of Pity ought to strike the deeper.

And moreover, "If he TURN AGAIN TO THEE;" (i.e.) if conscious of his Fault, he comes to us as if we were in God's Stead, professes his Repentance, and beseeches our Pardon; we should be almost ashamed of accepting such Condescension and Submission, and be sorry that we did not, by our Courtesy, prevent this humble Application, by a voluntary

Tender of Forgiveness: Forgiveness! alas, what can we forgive? his Sin? Human Pride has not yet pretended to assume that Power, and human Piety will pray God to forgive it: and it may be God has forgiven it on our Brother's Repentance. But his Punishment: Man, sinful Man, is ready & willing to think himself a proper Object of God's Mercy, and yet can hardly bear to think a Man, less sinful than himself, the Object of his own.

In a Word: A meek Man will shew such an Inclination and Readiness to forgive the Offences of others, as if he had perpetual Need of the same Indulgence: but will so carefully avoid giving the least Offence himself, as if it might be thought he would forgive no one.

To further and promote these Means for the suppressing of Anger, let us frequently reflect on the horrible Deformity and ill Consequences of it. (*)

For, What Agonies of Mind—What Disorder of Spirits—What Fury and Frenzy it hurries a Man into! (‡) These are things so observable, as being so incident to the Passion of Anger, that I need not further enforce them. Another

(*) *Odium et Iram Crux reprimit.*

(‡) *Damnum in Sinu horribilis Furia pascit.*
Mare Cælo confundat.
See the last Letter in No. 563 of the Spectator.

Another excellent Preservative would be, not to suffer our Anger to arise, till we have thoroughly examined the Matter, and have well weighed the Consequences of it. (*) Admirable to this Purpose is the wise Son of Sirach's Advice: "Admonish a Friend, it may be he hath not done it; and if he hath done it, that he do it no more: Admonish a Friend; for many Times it is a Slander, and believe not every Tale. (†) Could

(*) *Quandò tibi alieno quid dicendum, aut Rei Spectanda, da Consiliis Tempus, fræna Impetum, differ; nihil est agendum, quæ intempesta.* — Take nothing ill from another till you have made it your own Case. - *Omnes Homines eo in Injuriis effectos animos habere, quo nati sint, si quid tale acciderit, quisque alios esse velit.*

(†) As a Prevention of Anger, banish all Talebearers and Slanderers from your Conversation, for it is these that strike up the Flames of Rage and Fury: by first abusing our Ears, and then our Credulity, and after that steal away our Patience, and all this perhaps for a Lye.

—— —— *Variis dictum Rumoribus Ibat.*

To prevent Anger, be not too inquisitive into the Affairs of Others, or what others say of you, or into the Misbehaviour of your Friends; for this is going out to gather Fuel to consume your own Peace.

It proceeds from a weak Judgment to credit all we hear, or imitate all we see. *Ne sis studiosus nimium Criminatori. Audi alteram Partem.*

In almost all Controversies, what Men say of themselves, and what their Adversaries infer, or represent them as saying, are generally two very different things; and they who will not be at the Pains to consider distinctly what each Side alledges for itself, but will judge of either by the Character or Representation made of it by the Other only, will be forever led into erroneous Judgments concerning Men and things, and continue unavoidably ignorant of the true State of the Matter in Question, whatsoever it be.

(Serm. CXXVIII.) "Weigh

Could we once bring ourselves to this Resolution, the Business we are labouring at, were done: All hasty and precipitate Passion would effectualy, by this Means, be prevented; for, in the Time of this Consideration, our Minds would find Leisure to cool, and we should scarce ever be angry at all: but certainly never without a Cause. Lastly,

"Weigh well the Cause on either Side;
(Thousands in Life have been belied,)
Think not that Treachery can be just,
Take not Informers' Words on Trust;
They ope their Hand to every Fee,
And you and me, by Turns betrey.
The *first* Report, we grant, may 'pear
To you, by Art, to be quite clear,
Till the *nixt* comes, and puts it out,
And clears the Truth, beyond a Doubt."

Ut Fronti non fingier Fides; ita, quod Simul audiari fingitur, vasi credendum est. "He that is first in his own Cause, seemeth just; but his Neighbour cometh and searcheth him."

The first Report, therefore, should make no Impression upon us; for Falsehood many Times marches in the Front, and Truth follows in the Rear. We should, therefore, be always open to a *second* or *third* Information; to do otherwise, may be pernicious, and give Advantage to the Artifice of Malice; as ill-disposed Persons hasten to give a Tincture of Credulity.

"Blame not before thou hast examined the Truth; understand first, and then rebuke." For, "there is One that slipperth with his Speech, but not from his Heart; and who is he that hath not offended with his Tongue?"

Expedium primâ repetens ab Origine Famam.
Omnia prius experiri Verbis, quàm Armis, Sapientem decet.

See Note (*) Vol. vii. Page 300.

a blessing. Nothing will have so prevailing a Power to compose the undue Agitations of Passion, to appease the various Commotions we have with the Prejudices and Passions of others, nothing so to induce a smooth and easy Flow of Temper, as a frequent Application to the Throne of Grace, to beseech him who is "the God of Peace," that "his Peace may rule in our Hearts;" that it may be the fixed and predominant Principle there. This "Presence with the Lord," is a Kind of "Absence from the Body," and Absence from all the vain Imaginations, the Tumult of the Passions, and the sinful Thoughts which they suggest. The pure and serene Complacency that springs up in the Soul by this Intercourse with Heaven, shews that here she is nearest the Centre of her true Happiness, where the greatest things of the Earth lose all their Power of Attraction. The awful Contemplation of God's Greatness, and the Sense of our Littleness, but too powerfully impressed by the mortifying View of our Infirmities, will soon bring us to a Conviction that Pride, the great Source of intemperate Passion, was not "made for Man." The due Preparation of the Heart to wait upon God in this serious and solemn Exercise, will be of admirable Use to remove far from us all malicious, uncharitable, and undevo-

lent Thoughts. Strange! that these should find a Place in our Hearts, but for an Hour, against those whom we expect to be the Associates of our Happiness to all Eternity.

To be able perfectly to cure our Temper, to conquer ourselves wholly, and change our Disposition, is what no Man ought to expect in this World, nor to be disappointed or discouraged, if he finds even the moderating it to be the Work of Difficulty and Time; But, to endeavour to amend it daily, and to pray ardently for it, is our indispensible Duty; and he who considers how easily and suddenly he can restrain himself at the coming in of a Superior, whom he reveres among Men, must not pretend it impossible for him to govern his Passions, with the full Persuasion of the perpetual Presence of God.

There have been some, who have alledged in Excuse for themselves that Passage in Scripture, where the Apostles stile themselves "Men of like Passions with us." But, the Intent of that Passage is much misunderstood by an improper Translation. For the Intention of St. Paul and Barnabas' speaking in that Manner to the People of Lystra, was not to say, that they were Men "of like PASSIONS," in the Sense we now usually understand the Word; but, that

that they are Men of like Infirmities with other mortal Men," like themselves, subject to Diseases, Casualty, and Death, and therefore not to be worshiped as Gods. So St. James, "Elias was a Man subject to like Passions as we are;" not that he was a passionate, but that he was a mortal Man like One of us, and interceded effectually with God.

But, if the Meaning was, that the Apostles and Prophets had the same Passions with Us, (as undoubtedly they naturally had,) yet this is no Lesson for Us, unless, like them, we govern them and by the Rules of Reason and Religion.

To Conclude; As the Whirlwind, in its Fury, teareth up Trees, and deformeth the Face of Nature; or as an Earthquake, in its Convulsions, overturneth whole Cities; so the Rage of an angry Man throweth Mischief around him; Danger and Destruction wait on his Hand. But consider, and forget not thine own Weakness, so shalt thou pardon the Failings of others. Indulge not thyself in the Passion of Anger; it is the whetting a Sword to wound thine own Breast, or to murder thy Friend. If thou bearest slight Provocations with Patience, it will be imputed to thee for Wisdom; and if thou wipest them from thy Remembrance, thy Heart shall not reproach thee. Seest thou not, that the angry

Man looseth his Understanding? whilst thou art yet in thy Senses, let the Wrath of another be a Lesson to thyself. Do nothing in a Passion. Why wilt thou put to Sea in the Violence of a Storm? If it be difficult to rule thine Anger, it is wise to prevent it; avoid therefore all Occasions of falling into Wrath, or guard thyself against them whenever they occur. A Fool is provoked with insolent Speeches, but a wise Man laugheth them to Scorn. Consider how few things are worthy of Anger, and thou wilt wonder that any but Fools should be wroth. In Folly and Weakness it always beginneth; but remember, and be well assured, that it seldom concludeth without Repentance. On the Heels of Folly treadeth Shame, & at the Back of Anger standeth Remorse."

Upon the Whole, — What hath been here endeavoured at, is, not so much the utter abolishing the Passions of Men, for THAT were even against Nature itself, but only to regulate and reform them, and to "bring them into Subjection to the Obedience of Christ."

It is, that ye may "be angry, and sin not;" or rather, "if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, that ye live peaceably with all Men."

Sermon

SERMON —

The Sin of causing Offences among Men.

Matt. xviii. 7. "It must needs be that Offences "come, but Woe unto that Man by whom the "Offence cometh."

Tho our Saviour, in these Words, seems more particularly to intend Offences against the Gospel only, and the Propagation of it; yet with these, they may be equally explained with Regard to lesser Matters in Life, and the too general Prevalency of causing Offences and Divisions among Men, and the evil Consequences of it. "Woe unto the World, because of Offences, for it must needs be that Offences come; but Woe unto that Man, by whom the Offence cometh."

As in Matters of Property and Civil Right, it cannot be but that Wars and Desolations & Contentions, will arise among Men, (the Cause of which ought always to be charged, not upon him who strikes the first Stroke, but upon him, who by Oppression, Pride, Malevolence, or Ambition, unjustly encroaching upon

on his Neighbour's Rights, or aſſaulting his Perſon, makes the Breach unavoidable;) ſo, in Matters of Religion alſo, it is impoſſible but that Offences will come. The Progreſs of the Goſpel, and the Prevailing of Truth in the World, will be hindred by the ill Behaviour of Some; And the Practice of Righteouſneſs, among thoſe who have already embraced the Truth in Profeſſion, will be diſcouraged by the Corruption and Perverſeneſs of Others. But "Wo be to that Man, (ſays our Saviour,) through whom theſe Offences come:" Wo be to Him, who by his Wickedneſs hinders the Propagation of Truth, or the Practice of Virtue. Concerning Other Sinners, and ſuch as through Infirmity fall into Errors of all Kinds, our Saviour always ſpeaks with great Tenderneſs and Compaſſion; treating them, as a Phyſician does a weak Patient, with all poſſible Gentleneſs and Care. But thoſe who through Pride, or a Tyrannical Spirit oppoſe and ſet themſelves againſt the Truth, or thro Ambition, Malice, or for worldly Ends perſiſt in things which neceſſarily cauſe Diviſions and Contentions among Men, or by profligate Living corrupt Mankind; againſt thoſe through whom ſuch Offences come, he always denounces the ſevereſt Wo.

The Word, "Offence," in its general and moſt uſual Acceptation, ſignifies every Sin, every Action where-

by

by God or Man is offended or displeased. But in the Text, it seems more particularly to be meant of such Sins, as are Occasions either of deterring Men from embracing the Gospel, or of tempting them to disobey it. For so our Saviour, in the Words preceeding the Text, expressly explains it to be. "Whoso, (says he,) shall offend One of these Little Ones that believe in me;" one of these "Little Ones;" (i.e) any plain and sincere Christian, such a One as in the foregoing Part of his Discourse he had compared for Simplicity and Sincerity to a little Child; "Whoso shall offend one of these Little Ones;" whoso shall draw or lead such a One into Sin, better were it for him that a Millstone were hanged about his Neck, and that he were drowned in the Depth of the Sea." And then he goes on, in the Text, "It must needs be that Offences come; but Wo to that Man, by whom the Offence cometh." In which Passage what he means by Offence, he again explains. "Take heed that ye despise not One of these Little Ones;" take heed lest ye think it a light thing, a Matter of small Consequence, to draw them into Sin; for "I say unto you, that in Heaven their Angels do always behold the Face of my Father which is in Heaven:" (i.e) those mean and sincere Persons, whom ye have so little Regard for, are the Care of Angels, and under the Protection of God.

But to conſider more diſtinctly the Words of the Text - "It muſt needs be that Offences come; but Woe unto that Man by whom the Offence cometh."

In diſcourſing upon which Words it will be proper to ſhew particularly,

Firſt, what the principal Occaſions are whereby Offence is given,

II. How far, and in what Inſtances it is right and lawful to take Offence.

III. In what Senſe our Saviour muſt be underſtood to affirm that "it muſt needs be that Offences come," or, as it is expreſſed in St. Luke, "it is impoſſible but that Offences will come."

IV. The Sinfulneſs of this Practice, and the Danger of it. — And then,

Laſtly, Draw ſome particular Inferences from the Whole. — And,

Firſt, I am to ſhew the principal Occaſions whereby Offence is given. — And here,

Paſſing by capital Injuries as too palpably an Offence both to God and Man, I ſhall here only conſider ſuch Occaſions of Offence as are too commonly overlooked by Men, and therefore, as more generally fallen into, are more neceſſary to be guarded againſt.

And here, — Even in this leſſer Way, to enumerate all the Ways by which Offence is given, or taken,

thro'

thro' the Weakneſs and Perverſeneſs of Men, would be as impoſſible, as it would be tedious to relate: the chief of them only need be produced, which if duly regulated, the reſt will follow of Courſe. — And,

1ſt. A chief Means whereby we give Offence is by an Indulgence in diſordery Paſſions; by Diviſions and Contentions among Chriſtians, ariſing from Pride, and from a Deſire of Dominion, and from building Matters of an uncertain Nature, or of human Invention upon the Foundation of Chriſt. "Other Foundation, (ſays the Apoſtle,) can no Man lay, than that which is laid, even Jeſus Chriſt." — Upon this Foundation, "the whole Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord," ſupported by Righteouſneſs, and true Virtue, and united in one holy Bond of Charity and Love.

Did Men rightly underſtand This to be the great End of Chriſt's Religion, and ſincerely endeavour to practiſe it accordingly, whence then could Offences, Heats and Enmities, Contentions and Animoſities, poſſibly ariſe among Chriſtians; among thoſe whoſe Religion teaches them nothing but Meekneſs, Goodneſs and Charity. "From whence, (ſays the Apoſtle) come Wars and Fightings among you? come they not from hence, even from your Luſts, which war in your Members?" — "From the Luſt of the Fleſh,

the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life," from the Luſt of Dominion and temporal Power, – from the Luſt of Contentiouſneſs, Peeviſhneſs and Ambition; – from the Luſt of being Lords over each other's Faith and Judgment, inſtead of being Helpers together of the common Good, and in the common Salvation.

Almoſt all Heats and uncharitable Contentions among Chriſtians, have, in all Ages, ſprang from hence, not ſo much concerning the Commandments of God, which are all plain and eaſy to be underſtood by all; as about the Impoſitions, and the Authority of Men. Theſe have been the great Offence, which has hindered the Converſion of the World to Chriſt, (*) and embittered the Lives of Many. Whereas, He who is free from impetuous Paſſions, provokes no Man; nor is himſelf eaſily provoked. His Temperance, Soberneſs and Chaſtity; his Meekneſs, Mildneſs, Moderation and Forbearance, provoke no Man; and his innocent and inoffenſive Behaviour, heightened with Love and Beneficence, endear him to all Men.

2dly, Another Means whereby we give Offence, is, by Neglect of good Manners.

Many

(*) Infidel Nations obſerve that Chriſtians, who preach that their Religion is Charity, yet hate, revile and perſecute each other.

Many Offences are committed, not ſo much perhaps thro Malignity of Heart, as thro Capriciouſneſs, Haſtineſs, and Inattention.

Tho Goodneſs of Heart is the main thing; yet external Forms are not to be neglected.

Knowledge, ſoftened with Complacency and Good-breeding, will make a Man equally beloved and admired; but being joined with a rough, moroſe, and churliſh Temper, it makes us (with Nabal) rather feared than reſpected. — Indeed,

Without Decency, Valour would degenerate into Brutality; learning into Pedantry; and the genteeleſt Behaviour into Effeminacy and Affectation; even Religion itſelf, unleſs Decency be the Hand-maid which attends her, is apt to make us appear guilty of Sourneſs and Ill-humour: — but this ſhews Virtue in her firſt original Form; adds Comlineſs to Religion, and gives its Profeſſors the juſteſt Title to the "Beauty of Holineſs."

There is a Mean in all things; even Virtue itſelf hath her ſtated Limits.

This is the Advantage of a due Demeanour; whereas, a rough and forbidding Manner is the Offspring of Pride and Contempt; which, of all Ill-uſage, we can leaſt endure or excuſe. (*)

3dly, Another Means whereby we give Offence,

(*) See Note (*), Page 173. Vol. viii. 18,

is, by Evil-ſpeaking, or too freely ſpeaking; where we have no Occaſion. — And firſt,

Evil-ſpeaking. – As bad as we are, yet we are all deſirous to be well thought of: all the good Ends and Purpoſes of Life depending upon the Fairneſs and Probity of the Characters of Men.

No Wonder, then, when they find This blaſted by direct Inſult, or unfair Repreſentations, that Men ſhould in the higheſt Degree be offended at it.

"As Coals are to burning Coals, and as Wood to "Fire, ſo is a contentious Man to kindle Strife." "Where no Wood is, there the Fire goeth out; ſo "where is no Tale-bearer, there the Strife ceaſeth."

The Son of Sirach ſeems to carry this Matter very far; "Whether it be to Friend or Foe, (ſays he,) talk not of other Men's Lives; and, if thou canſt without Offence, reveal them not."

He that governs himſelf conſtantly by this Rule, takes One of the ſureſt and moſt promiſing Steps of not giving Offence to any. — But further,

Not only by Evil-ſpeaking, but alſo, by too FREELY ſpeaking, what is generally called, the Whole of our Minds, do we too commonly give Offence to Men.

Thoſe who love to ſpeak, (as they expreſs it,) the WHOLE of their Minds, FREELY, upon all Occaſions, (affronting thoſe above them, inſulting thoſe beneath them,

them; and diſpleaſing every One,) ſhould firſt take Care to think juſtly, as they ought; tenderly of others, and humbly and ſoberly of themſelves.

A Man of this Make will ſay a rude thing for the mere Pleaſure of ſaying it, when an oppoſite Behaviour, full as innocent, might have preſerved his Friend, and made his Fortune. He, whoſe honeſt Freedom makes it his Virtue to ſpeak as he thinks, makes it his Neceſſity to think what is good. "A Fool uttereth all his Mind, but a wiſe Man keepeth it in till afterwards: He hideth his Words for a Time, and the Lips of many ſhall declare his Wiſdom."

Again, — Another Means whereby we give Offence, is, by unneceſſarily intermeddling in the Affairs of others.

All Men naturally deſire to be Maſters of, and to purſue their own Buſineſs quietly, and without Interruption. — For,

Beſides the Offence hereby given, there is too often great Injuſtice done, as well as Damage ſuſtained. Moſt Men are beſt Maſters of their own Affairs, which an Intermeddler not knowing thoroughly, or not rightly underſtanding it, may either give wrong Advice in the Caſe, or report unfairly of it; not to mention the Loſs of Time and Hindrance which ſuch Intruders occaſion. This was it that made the A-

poſtle give this ſtrict Charge in the Caſe. – "We hear, (ſays he,) that there are ſome that walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, wandering about from Houſe to Houſe, and not only idle, but Tatlers alſo, and Buſie-bodies, ſpeaking things which they ought not: Now them that are ſuch, we command and exhort by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that with Quietneſs they work, and eat their own Bread." — And,

As by theſe Means we give Offence in a temporal Way; ſo, in a ſpiritual, we offend alſo, either by ill Principle, or corrupt Practice. — And firſt,

By ill Principle. — It is evident that, as is the Faith ſo will the Practice of Men always be; nothing therefore can be more clear, than that we may cauſe great Offences to Men, by propagating any Error, or Errors in Religion.

But the moſt dangerous and prevalent Method of giving Offence, of hindering Religion, & obſtructing the Propagation of it, is, by evil Example, by the wicked and vicious Lives of its Profeſſors. — For,

As the good Lives of thoſe who profeſs themſelves the Servants of God, are a "Light ſhining before Men," cauſing them to "glorify the God of Heaven," and to admire a Religion which is of ſuch great Benefit to Mankind: ſo, on the contrary, the vicious and corrupt Practices of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians,

tians, cannot but raiſe a Prejudice againſt, and caſt a Reproach upon the Religion, which ſeems to have ſo little Influence upon the Lives of its Profeſſors. "Theſe are the People of the Lord!" ſaid the Heathen, concerning the Children of Iſrael, when they tranſgreſſed before them. — But laſtly,

The laſt Way, that I ſhall here mention, of giving Offence, and which indeed is general, is, by direct Inſult. – And if, in the foregoing Caſes, even where our own Intereſts may ſometimes be the Occaſion, it is no ſmall Sin to give Offence, and to diſturb the Peace of Men and endanger their Salvation, to hinder the Goſpel of Chriſt, and promote the Kingdom of Satan; where ſhall we find Words to expreſs the Blackneſs of their Character, who, by direct Deſign, and with an evil Heart, purpoſely raiſe Commotions among Men, and make it their Buſineſs to ſow Striſe and Contention, "caſting about Fire-brands, Arrows and Death, whilſt themſelves are but in Sport!" This is to chuſe Evil for its own Sake, as ſuch; and is contrary to every End, and all the Intents and Injunctions of Religion, which is to eſtabliſh and promote Peace among ourſelves, and among all Men, to the mutual Good of Mankind in general; the which to fruſtrate by our evil Commotions, is therefore a ſure Sign of a rough and unhewn Spirit, not as yet

reduced from its natural Ferocity, nor poliſhed by Education, nor made gentle by civil Converſe.

Having thus at large explained what is meant in the Text, by the Word, "Offence," and how given; I proceed,

II. To conſider in what Senſe our Saviour muſt be underſtood to affirm, that "it muſt needs be," or, "it is impoſſible but that Offences will come."

There have been ſome ſo abſurdly unreaſonable, as to underſtand this of a PROPER OR NATURAL Neceſſity; as if God had ordained that Offences ſhould come, and had accordingly predeſtinated particular Men to commit them. But this is directly charging God with the Sins of Men, and making Him, not ourſelves, the Author of Evil.

The plain Meaning of our Saviour, when he affirms that "it muſt needs be that Offences will come," is This only; that, conſidering the State of the World, the Number of Temptations, the Freedom of Men's Will, the Frailty of their Nature, the Perverſeneſs & Obſtinacy of their Affections; it cannot be EXPECTED, it cannot be SUPPOSED, it cannot be HOPED, but that Offences WILL come; tho it is very unreaſonable they SHOULD come. Men NEED not, Men OUGHT not to corrupt the Doctrine of Chriſt; they need not diſhonour their Religion, by unchriſtian Heats, Contentions and

and Animoſities among themſelves; much leſs is there any NECESSITY that they ſhould live contrary to it, by vicious and wicked Practices: and yet, morally ſpeaking, It cannot be but that all theſe things WILL happen.

The Manner of uſing the like Expreſſions in other Parts of Scripture, does evidently & beyond Contradiction ſhow This to be the true Senſe of the Words. Thus our Saviour, (in St. Mark,) ſpeaking of Wars and Tumults, ſays, "When ye ſhall hear of Wars & Rumours of Wars, be ye not troubled; for ſuch things muſt needs be." They muſt NEEDS be; that is, not that God hath laid upon Men any NECESSITY of Quarreling; but that, from the Wickedneſs of the World, nothing better can be expected.

St. John, by a like Manner of ſpeaking, tells us of SOME Perſons ſo far improved in Virtue, that they CANNOT ſin: and St. Peter, of Others ſo extremely corrupted, that they CANNOT ceaſe from Sin: and our Saviour himſelf, of Rich Perſons, for whom, WITH Men, (i.e) HUMANELY ſpeaking, it is IMPOSSIBLE to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. — All which Expreſſions moſt evidently ſignify, not NATURAL Impoſſibilities, but MORAL Improbabilities only.

To mention but One Place more; "It cannot be (ſays our Lord) that a Prophet periſh out of Jeruſalem:"

lem:" His Meaning is This only; that Jeruſalem was then ſo very wicked and corrupt a Place, that it would be a very ſtrange thing, a thing hardly to be imagined, that a Prophet ſhould be ſlain in any OTHER City.

And Thus therefore likewiſe in the Text, "It muſt needs be," or, "it is impoſſible but that Offences will come:" That is; In the Courſe of a World, wherein, (according to the Nature of a Probation-ſtate,) ALL Men are FREE, and among them SOME are WEAK, and MANY will be WICKED; it cannot be expected but that Offences MUST come. And it is very reaſonable for the Providence of God to permit it ſo to be, for the Trial & Improvement of the Sincere: "There MUST be Hereſies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt:" The Meaning is; There WILL be Factions, Parties, and Animoſities, ariſing among worldly and contentious Men: And by theſe, the Providence of God tries and diſtinguiſhes, who are Lovers of the Truth, the Goodneſs, and Meekneſs of the Goſpel; and who, on the contrary, are of worldly, factious, and contentious Tempers.

Seeing, then, that "Offences muſt needs come," I ſhall proceed to ſhew,

III. How far, and in what Inſtances, it may be right and lawful for us to take Offence, and how it becomes a wiſe and prudent Man to act under it.

That

That paſſive Tameneſs, which ſubmits, without a ſtruggle, to every Encroachment of the Violent and Aſſuming, forms no Part of Chriſtian Duty; but, on the contrary, is deſtructive of general Happineſs and Order. That unlimited Complaiſance, which, on every Occaſion, falls in with the Opinions and Manners of others, is ſo far from being a Virtue, that it is itſelf a Vice. It overthrows all Steadineſs of Principle, and produces That ſinful Conformity with the World, which taints the whole Character. In the preſent corrupted State of human Manners, always to aſſent and to comply, is the worſt Maxim we can adopt. — It is impoſſible to ſupport the Purity and Dignity of Chriſtian Morals without oppoſing the World, on various Occaſions, even tho we ſhould ſtand alone.

That Gentleneſs, therefore, which belongs to Virtue, is to be carefully diſtinguiſhed from the mean Spirit of Cowards, and the fawning Aſſent of Sycophants. It renounces no juſt Right from Fear, it gives up no important Truth from Flattery. It is indeed not only conſiſtent with a firm Mind, but it neceſſarily requires a manly Spirit, and a fixed Principle, in Order to give it any real Value.

If therefore, in temporal Matters, Reaſon bids us ſhew the Man; how much more ſo, when things of a higher Nature are the Occaſions of it, and the Name

of God, and Things SACRED are lightly and wantonly treated, the great Truths of the Goſpel ridiculed, and our Salvation endangered; Here, whoever hath the leaſt Concern, that he ought, for theſe things, (and no Man can have too high a Value for them,) ſhould, in the moſt ſenſible Manner, be offended at a Practice, ſo repugnant to every Principle both of Nature and Religion; and ſharply reprove ſuch Offenders for their Wickedneſs and Folly. For,

If, in Proportion to the Eſteem we have for any Perſon, or our Relation to him, and the high Value wherein we are attacked, we think ourſelves offended by any Indignity offered, How much higher muſt the Affront needs riſe, and, (One would imagine,) our Reſentment with it, when the Eternal God, and the chiefeſt Intereſts of Mankind, are contemned, diſhonoured, and abuſed!

There is a Tameneſs of Spirit, therefore, which deſerves Cenſure; and, in ſome Caſes, "we even do well to be angry."

Our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, the moſt perfect Pattern of Meekneſs and Patience, is ſaid not only to have "grieved, but to have looked upon the Phariſees with Anger, becauſe of the Hardneſs of their Heart." The Truth is, there ſeems to be ſomething manly, and we may be bold to ſay, ſomething virtuous in a juſt and well-

grounded Reſentment. — In the mean Time, Let us not be ſuſpected of endeavouring to vindicate Rage, and implacable Severity; No: ſuch is their Deformity, ſo horrid and manifeſt are the Evils they produce, that they do not admit of Defence or Juſtification. We condemn, we deteſt them as unnatural, unmanly and monſtrous; All we contend for, is, that in theſe high Matters, we ſhould ſo far reſent the Offence, as to maintain our Innocence; whilſt, in Matters of leſſer Moment, and but of ſmall Concern, a ſuperior & commanding Air, and generous Contempt, may be the wiſeſt Conduct; but the beſt Revenge of all, is That which torments Malice by doing good.

This is the Conduct of Innocence; but it may be, we ourſelves may have given the Occaſion for the Offence which we reſent; In this Caſe Prudence dictates to us a different Conduct.

Every Chriſtian Duty and good Office ſhould adorn us in this Life; if therefore we fail in theſe things, their juſt Conſequences are to be expected.

If our Faults, therefore, are repreſented to us by Others, with Mildneſs and in the Spirit of Charity and Love, we ſhould not take Offence where no Offence was intended; if we do, the Woe, the Sin, will be upon ourſelves, thro' whom the Offence cometh; but ſhould rather improve the Admonition, in Amend-

ment, and thank the Reprover. And even where our Faults are maliciouſly objected to us, we ſhould conſider, that tho' thus to OFFEND is realy a Fault, (*) yet there is ſtill a greater than this, [viz.] the giving Occaſion for the Offence. Yet ſtill, we may make this good Uſe of it, – We may reform, and cut-off all Occaſions of Reproach for the future; and ſo turn the Malice of our Enemies into our greateſt and beſt Advantage; for, as a virtuous Man may be innocently revenged of his Enemies by perſiſting in well-doing; ſo a wicked Man, by reforming his Life.

Therefore, — IV. Of the Sinfuneſs of this Practice, and the Danger of it. "Woe unto that Man, by whom the Offence cometh."

Anger without Cauſe, and Anger in Exceſs are both of them ſinful, but there is a Sin greater than theſe, [viz] the provoking others to Anger – The firſt may ariſe from Warmth of Conſtitution, or a miſtaken Notion of things – but the latter can ariſe from nothing but Malignity of Temper, and a Delight in the Enmity of others, in direct Oppoſition to that Spirit of Peace, which it is no leſs the Duty than Intereſt of every Man to promote: – and he that by other

(*) "Reproach not a Man that turneth from his Sin; but remember that we are all worthy of Puniſhment."

other Offences, either in Precept or Practice, ſeduceth others into Sin, is himſelf doubly ſinful. For,

In the State of Danger, wherein we are placed, God hath made us Watchmen over each other for our Good; if therefore, inſtead of anſwering this noble Purpoſe, we irritate and offend, and thereby draw others into Wickedneſs, let us conſider what the End of theſe things will be – The Command is the Reverſe of this, we are to "conſider one another, and provoke one another to Love, and to good Works."

It will be found a Matter hard enough to anſwer for our own Sins, and to bear the Guilt and Burden of our own Tranſgreſſions, without having to anſwer for the Sins of others. — But,

When all the Wickedneſs which others ſhall have committed by our evil Commotions, is to be anſwered for by us, we ſhall find, by woeful Experience, that we might have employed ourſelves and our Time much better, and ſhall be no leſs confounded with the Shame than at the Guilt of not having done ſo: for, at the End of Time, "God, (ſaith our Saviour,) will ſend forth his Angels, and they ſhall gather out of his Kingdom all things that OFFEND, and them which do Iniquity."

The Inferences I ſhall draw from what has been already ſaid, are, (Vol. viii.) 1ſt,

1ſt. From the Explication which has been given of theſe Words of our Saviour, "It muſt needs be that Offences come;" we may learn, not to charge God with Evil; nor to aſcribe to any Decree of His, the Wickedneſs and Impieties of Men. And whenever any Text of Scripture may poſſibly in the literal Senſe to a careleſs Reader ſeem to give Countenance to any ſuch Notion, we muſt always be careful to compare with it OTHER Expreſſions of the like Nature, which will be found in other parallel Places of Scripture; and then the true Senſe of Both, will eaſily appear, even to a mean Underſtanding.

2dly, Since our Saviour has forewarned us, that it muſt needs be that ſuch Offences will come, as may prove Stumbling-blocks to the weak and unattentive; let us take care, ſince we have received this Warning, not to ſtumble or be offended at them. Let us not becauſe ſome will be wicked and contentious, let us not upon any of theſe Accounts, which our Saviour has ſo plainly forewarned us of, think at all the worſe of Religion, or be ourſelves offended by it. — But,

3dly, Let us, (for the better ſecuring of our Peace & Serenity in Life,) "mark them who cauſe Offences and Diviſions among us, contrary to the Truth, and avoid them." The Apoſtle is particularly urgent in this, charging us, that "if any be a Railer, or contentious

tentious, with ſuch a One, no not to eat." – And the Reaſon is truly evident, leaſt we ſhare in their Malevolence, and be ourſelves provoked to Anger, for "as Coals are to burning Coals, ſo is a contentious Man to kindle Strife." – Only therefore can we be ſecure from their Danger, when we are at a Diſtance from their Contagion. — But, (and above all,)

4thly, As we ought not to TAKE, ſo, much more, ought we to be careful that we never GIVE any of theſe Offences; but to "have a good Report of all Men, giving no Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God."

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